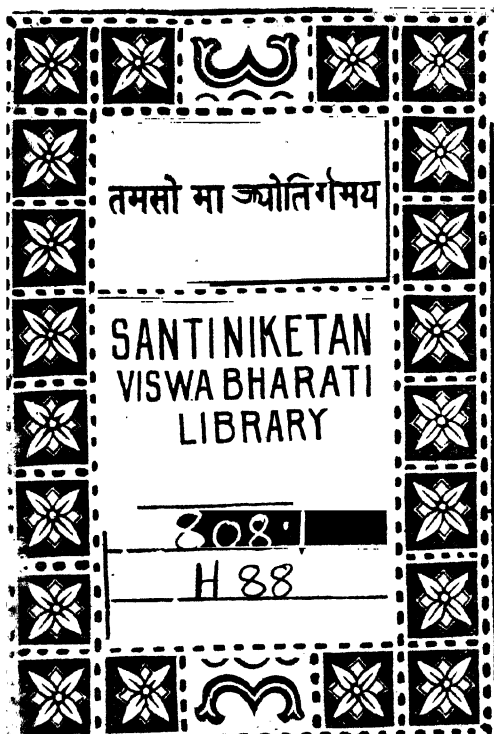
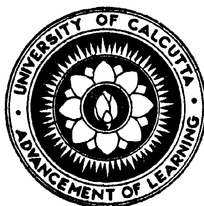


Poetry Monads and Society

POETRY MONADS AND SOCIETY

Sir George Stanley Lectures 1941

HUMAYUN KABIR



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For

Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

Philosopher and Humanist

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PREFACE

The invitation by the University of Madras to deliver the Sir George Stanley Lectures for 1941 served as an incentive to organise and record some thoughts on the paradox of communication in poetry. They centre round the problem of reconciling the claims to uniqueness and universality which art simultaneously makes. The three essays in the book represent, without substantial alteration, the lectures as delivered. This fact accounts for occasional repetition and laxity of construction, but I have tried to maintain as rigidly as I could the logical structure of the argument. The essay on Yeats in the Appendix is based on an article which appeared in the Bengali Quarterly, *Chaturanga,* at the time of Yeats' death. Though written some two years ago, it seems to illustrate the theory of poetry I have tried to develop in the course of the lectures and has therefore been included.

The theory of poetry suggested in the course of these lectures can lay no claim to novelty or originality. My obligations are many and manifold and have been indicated wherever possible, but in the very nature of the case, a great deal of my indebtedness must remain

unspecified. I must content myself with a general acknowledgement of obligation to all writers of aesthetics from whom I have learnt anything by way of agreement or difference.

I am grateful to the University of Madras for the invitation to the lectureship and the facilities it extended to me in the selection and preparation of my theme and to the University of Calcutta for permitting me to accept the lectureship and undertaking the publication of the work. Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee, a former Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, has inspite of the distractions of a busy political life read the book in typescript and placed me under deep obligation by his uniform consideration and courtesy. I am indebted to Professor V. K. Ayappan Pillai of Presidency College, Madras for his interest and help in the preparation of the work, Messrs. S. C. Sen and R. K. Das Gupta of Calcutta University for correcting the proofs and my student, Mr. K. K. Banerjee for preparing the Index. I am grateful to Mr. J. Chakravorti, Registrar of Calcutta University for his interest in the work at every stage of its production. I must also thank Mr. S. N. Guha Ray and the staff of Sree Saraswaty Press for their generous co-operation in the production of the book.

POETRY PLEASURE AND UTILITY

Poetry
Pleasure and Utility

Plato who was in many respects one of the greatest of poets yet denied to the poet any function in his Ideal State. Like many another judgment of great men, posterity remembers the dictum only as an example of an amusing lapse of a great mind. Plato's distrust of the artist was not perhaps entirely accidental or arbitrary. Caudwell's dismissal of Plato as a reactionary and fascist philosopher, bound by his very nature to deny all culture—"particularly contemporary culture"—may be far too sweeping a condemnation. The strictly authoritarian Platonic State could, however, hardly allow for the existence of a type whose essential activity is characterised by spontaneity and freedom of expression. The mathematician in Plato wanted to derive the particular from the universal and

demanded order and precision in life. The empirical world,—which for the ordinary man exhausts reality,—was for Plato real only so far as it imitated or shared in the nature of the Idea. Art, which Plato regarded as an imitation of experience or life, was therefore for him still further removed from the Idea and doubly unreal. The Idea was ordered, precise and rational. Nature which imitated the Idea exhibited uniformities which suggested order, precision and rationality. Art which imitated nature lacked even these imperfect uniformities, for "a poet is indeed a thing etherially light, winged and sacred, nor can he compose anything worth calling poetry until he becomes inspired, and, as it were, mad, or whilst any reason remains in him". What wonder then that the philosopher in Plato should hate poetry even though he is charmed by it as a man?

The rationalist's discomfort before this irrational and anarchic element in art was perhaps in Plato's case heightened by an identification of art with craft. The conception of art as something distinct from craft is a late achievement of the human mind. Even to-day the obsolescent suggestion of craft not unoften obscures our idea of art. With Plato, the

identification was simple and unconscious and led to further disparagement of art in his mind. The aristocratic Plato perhaps had a somewhat patronising and superior attitude towards all crafts, with that slight admixture of contempt which such attitudes always contain. His refusal to explain justice in terms of the theory of craft further strengthens this suspicion. In the case of poetry this contempt was the greater. Here was a craft, which unlike the craft of the carpenter or the cobbler, produced nothing tangible, and what was worse, obeyed no definite rules. In the other crafts, consciously controlled and directed action produced preconceived results. In the craft of poetry, "whilst a man retains any portion of the thing called reason, he is utterly incompetent to produce poetry or to vaticinate".

Professor Collingwood has tried to defend Plato against the charge of philistinism. He contends that what Plato attacks is the craft of amusement, not what we moderns mean by art. He adduces as evidence the honoured place that magico-religious art is given in the Republic. It is only the new amusement art of a fast degenerating people that Plato attacks with all the power of his logic and eloquence. Nor has Plato

anything against what we call lyric poetry. It is significant that Aristotle's Poetics—meant to be a counterblast to Plato—also contains no reference to such poetry. This silence is not without importance. It may be due to the fact that for Aristotle, lyric poetry was inseparably bound up with music. Another thing may, however, have weighed with him equally. Since Plato had not questioned the value of such poetry, Aristotle was not called upon to offer any special defence for it. That the latter is the more likely explanation is suggested by the fact that lyric poetry would have given Aristotle invaluable aid in making out his central position as against Plato. Aristotle's explicit reference to music and architecture in modifying the Platonic conception of mimesis strengthens still further this latter hypothesis.

Professor Collingwood therefore seems at first sight justified in claiming that Plato's attack was directed not against poetry as such, but only against representative poetry of a particular type. But only at first sight. Professor Collingwood has himself pointed out that any evaluation of representative art—whether of the amusement or the magical type—is possible only after the nature of art in itself has been

determined. This Plato neither does nor even tries to do. Also, for Plato there was hardly any distinction between craft and art in our sense. Even the distinction which Plato at times makes between amusement and magical art proves this: amusement art is a craft for amusing men and magical art one for educating and elevating them.

In any case, Plato does in the end banish from his Republic all imitative poetry just because it is imitative. Even non-imitative poetry does not fare much better, for the exception in favour of "hymns to the gods and praises of good men" is more apparent than real. Such poetry is obviously craft in a different form, and therefore representative. The craft of educating and elevating men by a direct appeal to their sentiments instead of through the representation of noble lives can be regarded as non-imitative only if we restrict the term to sheer literal representation.

That Plato never attempted to distinguish between art and craft may be seen in another way. His discussion of imitative poetry is vitiated by a false conception of imitation or mimesis. He identifies it with mimicry. Professor Abercrombie has suggested that Plato's assimilation of

poetry to painting facilitated his attack on poetry, "for the notion that imitation is mimicry is most easily supported in painting". Whether this is really the case is another matter, for it may and has been held that "painting can never be a visual art. A man paints with his hands, not with his eyes". For Plato, however, the assimilation did something more. A painting or a statue is more easily taken to be an artifact than a poem or piece of music. Plato's assimilation of poetry to painting made it easier for him to identify art with craft. Once this had been achieved, it was easy for him to condemn art and that for two reasons. Art was only an imitation of real life and therefore less valuable, for what is the white of the palette beside the whiteness of the smallest flake of snow? Besides, art is harmful, for such mimicry exercises and excites the emotions. By increasing our sensibility to the point of sentimentality, it tends to the debility of spirit and a weakening of moral fibre. Among arts, the craft of poetry is the most futile: it is not only an unnecessary and superfluous but also an unworthy form of activity.

Plato's indictment of the nature and function of poetry did not long go unanswered. More often than not, however, the defenders of

the poet have proved dangerous allies. They have tolerated or at best justified the poet, not because of his peculiar contribution to human life and experience, but because of his aid in furthering motives and ends to which the character of his special activity is only secondary. This holds good of even so reputed a champion of poetry as Aristotle. While he shows an advance on Plato in his understanding of the nature of mimesis in poetry, his failure to distinguish between art and craft makes his appraisement of the function of the poet quite as unsatisfactory as that of Plato himself.

Before proceeding to examine the various defences advanced on behalf of the poet, we want for the purposes of our discussion to identify him with his poetry. This does not, of course, imply that the man who composes poems is poetry personified. A human individuality is a complex of diverse elements more or less perfectly organised. We only mean that the poetic aspect of his nature cannot be isolated from the activity by which it is distinguished from the other aspects of his individuality. This is to admit that the poet does not exhaust the man. In the words of T. S. Eliot, "The more perfect the artist, the more completely

separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates". It may well be that this reminder is necessary to protect the poet from non-aesthetic and irrelevant attacks. For aesthetics, however, the man is interesting only in so far as the pure poet in him is embodied in, and indeed identical with the poetic expression. It is, therefore, a matter of indifference whether we speak of the function of the poet or of poetry.

II

The function of poetry has been often and variously described. It is interesting to observe that poets themselves have differed more about their function than perhaps even poets have a right to. The very fact of indecision of poets—and nobody who is not at least potentially a poet has a right to talk about the function of poetry—should make us careful in our analysis of the nature of poetry. A thing's function is nothing but its nature considered dynamically. The indeterminacy of our attitude to the function of the poet suggests alternative inferences about the nature of poetry.

It may be that this uncertainty about the function of poetry is due to the nature of poetry itself. With Plato we may say that the poetic activity is an unconscious activity. We may mean thereby, not merely that the poetic activity is mysterious in its nature, but also that the consciousness of any activity as poetic is incompatible with the poetic character of such acts. Introspection is possible only through retrospection, but the peculiar character of the poetic

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activity makes any introspective assessment of its function impossible. We can therefore arrive at it *post facto* and only inferentially, through attempts at comparing and equating the experiences of different individuals. Poets are as subject to this limitation as any other human beings, and perhaps more so. This would in part explain the failure of poets to agree about their own function.

It may, on the other hand, be that the uncertainty about the function of poetry is due, not to the mysterious character of the poetic activity, but to its confusion with various other forms of activity which resemble or even overlap some of its manifestations. One instance of such confusion we have seen in the Greek tendency to identify art with craft, a tendency which survives in various forms even to this day. This has resulted, not only in definitions based on what Professor Collingwood calls the fallacy of precarious margins, but in others which "purport to tell us what poetry is, but really tell what kind of poem the author likes, or upon what quality when reading he most fixes his attention. Poetry has been defined by estimable authorities as imitation of human life, glimpse of the divine, wine of the devil, as expression of

emotion, sublime expression of truth, aspiration toward beauty, communication of pleasure, as speaking pictures, apparent pictures of unapparent natures, as reality, as make-believe, as concrete, as abstract, metaphor, metre, madness, wisdom, sanity, trance,—there is almost no way in which poetry has not been defined." Would such confusion be possible if the nature of poetry were as esoteric and unique as Plato suggests? Is not the conclusion forced on us that poetry is something so general as to be almost coterminous with experience itself? The two alternatives, however, lead to the same predicament. Whether a man hides himself in a cavern known and accessible to himself alone or loses himself in the welter of humanity of a London crowd, concealment is equally effective. The nature of poetry defies analysis equally whether we regard it as rare and esoteric like divinity or general and common as experience itself.

Plato's theory of poetry as originating mysteriously from an "impulse of the divinity within" need not be discussed at length, for the simple reason that, by definition, it defies discussion or analysis. One can only wonder why Plato wanted to shut out of his Republic the voice of God speaking through man. But

alongside of this theory of poetry as divine madness, there is in Plato, as we have already seen, another theory of poetry in terms of utility and craft. This was the theory of Aristotle as well, for the two philosophers agree in holding that the function of poetry is social amelioration. The only difference between them is with regard to what ameliorates: while Plato restricts the ameliorative effect only to "hymns to the gods and praises of good men", Aristotle extends it to representative poetry of every type.

In fact, most defenders of poetry, whether practising poets or not, have been utilitarian in their attitude. Nor is this surprising. All things can in a sense be brought under the utilitarian test. Value is necessarily a utilitarian concept. But the attempt to reduce all judgments of value to any one type is the temptation most fatal to the utilitarian. It is also the one to which he most readily succumbs. Almost all utilitarian defenders of poetry are open to this charge. They have sought to justify poetry in terms of the one value which has appealed to them most. Thus, for some the pleasure it has brought, for others a heightening of the consciousness and for others still its educative or

reformatory efficacy,—in a word, its delight or its uplifting power,—has been held to be the only justification for the existence of the poet's art.

Before we take up some representative theories in greater detail, we must make explicit what has already been implied. The mistake of the utilitarian generally lies in taking any one type of value to be the only value in life and interpreting all reality in terms of it. The application of this method to poetry is disastrous. It involves that the utilitarian evaluates poetry, not in terms of its own nature, but by bringing to it a preconceived standard from some external source. The standard may, and often does contain elements which we find in poetry and which yet do not constitute its essence. Or it may be that an element is chosen which poetry shares with other types of experience, and cannot therefore demarcate it from them. The utilitarian mistake lies in taking the genus or an accident as the differentia of poetry. Thus it need not for a moment be supposed that poetry is not delightful or uplifting. In fact it most often is the one or the other or both. At the same time it must, however, be insisted that to delight or to uplift is not the function of poetry as such.

The above statement can hardly hope to pass unchallenged. Honoured names will be brought up to support the claims of delight or uplift or both. The names are such as demand that the claims be examined with care and sympathy. For the hedonistic theory of art, one may quote from Coleridge: "A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth." That this was not a casual thought is proved by his reiteration of the definition in various lectures, *e.g.*, in the words, "The immediate object of science was the communication and acquirement of truth, the immediate object of poetry is the communication of pleasure." And yet this confusion of pleasure as an effect with pleasure as the object lands Coleridge into patent inconsistency and self-contradiction. For one thing, it can hardly be reconciled with his theory of poetry as bringing "the whole soul of man into activity", an expression of the secondary imagination which, "identical with the primary in the kind of its operation" re-forms the world for us and invests it with all values other than those necessary for our bare continuance as living beings. For another, it opens up more questions

than it solves. What is the force of 'immediate' in this definition? In what sense can we say that the murder of Desdemona or the death of Cordelia evokes in us a sense of immediate pleasure? One can understand the communication of truth to be the object of science, for the possession of truth by the communicator is the condition of such communication. Can it be said that the communication of pleasure in the same sense is the object of art? To be communicated, the pleasure must already exist in the mind of the poet, but can the pleasure of poetry exist before its expression in the poem?

It will not even do to identify, with Dr. I. A. Richards, Coleridge's pleasure with the pleasure of activity. Such identification adds hardly anything to the meaning of pleasure. Besides, as Max Eastman remarks, "Not only is the poet not seeking pleasure in the naked and abstract way that Coleridge imagined, but the scientist is not seeking a 'truth' quite so all-embracing and akin to a total report of experience as he and the essayists of his day conceived". Whether this does adequate justice to Coleridge's many-sided and at times inconsistent theories does not concern us here, but it cannot be too strongly emphasised that

"pleasure" is an abstraction which nobody seeks. Even the correction that men desire, not pleasure in general but pleasures of a particular kind does not go far enough. Strictly speaking, men do not desire pleasure, whether general or particular, but particular objects in satisfaction of specific wants.

Apart from the general objection to all forms of hedonism, a hedonistic theory of art has to face the additional difficulty that not everything which gives delight is poetry. Pleasure is an accompaniment of all conscious experience, except when some impediment interferes with the passage of the nervous energy into the conscious field. The converse of this statement is equally true. There can be no pleasure where there is no conscious experience. All activity as such must be pleasurable, as otherwise it would not be. To say that poetry is delightful is merely to say that it involves activity. But this in no way distinguishes poetic activity from any other form of human activity. As the emergence of bare consciousness brings with it an element of activity, this merely reduces to saying that poetry first emerges above, or at the level of bare consciousness. Further, the pleasure

involved in activity is, *qua* pleasure, identical in all cases. Pleasure, therefore, offers no criterion for distinguishing poetry from any other form of human activity, or even of human consciousness. Supporters of such theories are, therefore, forced to beg the question. They assert that the function of poetry is to delight, not with any and every kind of pleasure, but pleasure of one peculiar kind. The distinctive character of such pleasure can, however, be described only in terms of poetry itself. This merely means that the function of poetry is to give poetic delight, which is or involves a tautology. The only element of truth in such a theory of poetry is the recognition of its character as an activity, but has anyone ever questioned it?

An attempt has been made to avoid the collapse into tautology by bringing poetry, and generally art, into line with play. The suggestion is that art is analogous with play and the pleasure of art is of the same kind as that of play. Play, it is further suggested, is an expression of superfluous energy and so is art: something not necessary for the purposes of bare existence.

The distinctive feature of play is that it has no ulterior end, even though it may be that, as a matter of fact, play has beneficent effects.

The distinction between gymnastics and games is that gymnastics are done with the deliberate intention of improving the physique or the general health, while games are their own justification. Any improvement of health or physique is for games a mere by-product. Of course, games also may develop into a cult, as in the case of English public school boys who religiously take to cricket or rugby football. Or in the *sportismus* of continental Europeans after the Great War of 1914. In such cases they become, as Professor Collingwood has aptly said, ritual art or magic: a craft in which we can clearly distinguish ends and means. In play proper, the distinction between ends and means seems almost overcome. Our pleasure in the game can hardly be distinguished from our skill in it. It is common experience that we enjoy games at which we are good, while those at which we are inexpert become an imposition in proportion to our lack of skill. The distinction is not, however, totally overcome. Under certain conditions, even lack of skill cannot prevent our enjoyment, so that pleasure is seen to be distinct from the skill in which it inheres. This suggests obvious analogies with art. In art also—as opposed to craft—means and ends cannot be

distinguished. Yet there is a distinction resembling that between means and ends but not identical with it. In addition, play often assumes an attitude of make-believe, which involves a distinction between the real and the imaginary. Such distinction is invariably the result of a desire. The imaginary in make-believe thus takes on the form of a wish fulfilment. Hence, and particularly in adult life, play is not in the last analysis as disinterested as it at first sight seems. With this discovery, the main purpose of the identification of art with play disappears.

There is, however, in play another element which is seen most prominently in childhood and gradually fades with age. For children, there is no distinction between the real and the imaginary, and hardly any between the subject and the object. Play is for them indistinguishable from work and constitutes the only mode of their self-expression, using the term without any mystical or metaphysical significance. Or perhaps it is better, with Max Eastman, to describe play as a case of 'general motility'. When lower organisms are active without seeking a defined and definite end under the drive of a specific need or tendency, biologists refer to this as general motility. That such activity is

conditioned by the structure and environment of the organism and may prepare it for its future life does not take away from its character as sheer expression of vitality. The play of children may thus reflect their physical condition and also their social background. It may even serve as an unconscious rehearsal of their future role in life. This does not, however, make such play either amusement or magic. There is no distinction of the real and the imaginary for the child and therefore no make-believe. Nor does the distinction of means and ends apply to such activity, for it is prior to the emergence of specific purposes.

Poets and philosophers have often tried to explain art in terms of such activity. The similarities between the two are obvious. Keats may be referring to this same element in play when he speaks of negative capability as the essential characteristic of a poet, *viz.*, the power "of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact or reason". Is not this an almost perfect description of the mentality of a child with its complete unconcern for practical affairs or for the distinction between work and play? We are also reminded of Kant's insistence upon

disinterested pleasure as a moment of the aesthetic judgment. To try to identify art with this element in play is to finally abandon the hedonistic theory of art. For, the essence of this element—whether in children's play or in the general motility of the worm, in the negative capability of Keats or in the disinterested pleasure of Kant—is that there is no pursuit of pleasure, or indeed of any preconceived end. In all such cases, the activity is its own end, an expression of the simple joy of living for its own sake.

The hedonistic theory of art thus fails, but nevertheless, the correlation of art to play, particularly children's play, is fruitful for our understanding of art. The divorce of activity from any preconceived end and the pleasure accompanying such activity are important elements in pure play and suggest obvious analogies with art. This dissociation from the urgencies of practical life invests pure play with a self-containedness that is also significant to our purpose. Pure play is complete and autonomous, and forms an independent universe of its own, unrelated even to other universes of play. Thus a child is a robber in one game and a king in the next, or perhaps both simultaneously.

Persons who die in the course of one game revive miraculously for the next. Nor is all this a case of make-believe. Make-believe implies a consciousness of the distinction between the real and the imaginary which pure play simply ignores. Its logic is not the logic of what we regard as the real world. The transition from pure play to ritual is marked by the emergence of relations between different games. This shows that the real world is asserting itself and bringing back the demands of consistency which pure play does not recognise. Pure play, therefore, has a monadic character which closely resembles the monadic character of art. One poem can no more contradict another poem than to-day's play contradict the play of yesterday. In a sense, the disinterested pleasure and the monadic character both derive from pure play's unconcern for the distinction of the real and the imaginary. The resemblance of art to play depends on their common sharing in this characteristic of imaginative freedom.

III

The didactic theory of poetic function seems more promising at first sight. Poets have given it their blessing and critics have exalted it. To justify the ways of God to man, to sharpen and deepen the appreciation of nature and natural beauty, or to enhance, refine and spiritualise human life and relations seem ends for which even so glorious an instrument as poetry might well be used. A poet like Shelley does not hesitate to write: "The poet not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers the laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germ of the flower and fruit of latest time." For him, the function of poetry is unacknowledged legislation for the world.

There is of course no denying that poetry is instructive in one sense. The activity of the poet results in the existence of an entity with which none was acquainted before, but of which any one who reads the poem may now have experience. We shall have to examine later

what the nature of this entity is. But in this sense, all experience is instructive or at least informative. On such a theory, poetry can in no way be distinguished from other objects, material or non-material, which come within the province of human experience, understanding experience in the widest sense of the term. To call poetry instructive therefore merely means that poetry is an object of human experience. If this be all that the didactic theorists of poetic function mean, they waste their efforts. No one ever dreams of questioning it.

They do not, however, mean merely this. Before we try to evaluate such a theory of poetic function, we must distinguish between the various forms in which it may be held. A crude form of the theory, which holds that the function of poetry is to teach in the narrow sense of the term, seems to have been restated in recent times by Mr. Joad in his Matter, Life and Value. For Mr. Joad, poetry is essentially didactic and the vehicle of a message. The poet is a seer who responds to values which have not yet entered into the texture of common experience. He is thus sensitive to reality which has not yet become empirical and has the prophetic power of anticipating those elements in it whose

incursion into experience is imminent. In his verse, he not only foretells of their advent, but through such prophecy, prepares the average man for the heightening of consciousness that will result from the achievement and possession of these values. In a word, poetry is the instrument of evolutionary purpose, facilitating the emergence of a new level of consciousness.

We are not directly concerned here with Mr. Joad's metaphysics, though no doubt it is necessary as a presupposition of his theory of poetry. As T. S. Eliot has it, "You cannot draw a line between criticism and metaphysics; you start with literary criticism, and however rigorous an aesthete you may be, you are over the frontier into something else sooner or later." But even if we accept Mr. Joad's metaphysics and hold with him that there is a world of value, —non-human, non-material and non-mental but yet real, which is somewhere there, "waiting to be discovered independently of our seeking,"— his theory yet remains unsatisfactory. It is, first of all, contradicted by the actual experience of poets. The poet does not start with the object of solving a social or moral problem, or promulgating a new doctrine. He is not even conscious that the general betterment of the race is an

object of his poetic endeavours. On the contrary, he often exhibits an almost callous indifference to vital social problems of his times, for "with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration."

It is possible to retort that all this may be true and yet the poet serve as a mere instrument of evolutionary purpose. Is it not common experience that a person often fulfils a function without being aware of it? In the complicated social mechanism of the modern world, individuals perform functions of which they have not even the faintest idea. Since the poetic activity is an 'unconscious activity', such ignorance of function, it may be said, is the more natural in the case of poetry.

This retort is not, of course, open to Mr. Joad, but the objection even on merits has little validity. For we have already seen that activity as such must be conscious and to call poetic activity unconscious would be to deny that it is an activity. This would land us in Plato's theory of poetry as a miracle: the divinity expressing itself through the poet who is a mere mouthpiece. Such theory defies analysis, and in any case, it allows no function to the

poet. All that the poet can do is to passively wait for the spirit to descend upon him and inspire him to utter messages not his own. No doubt men in the modern world often perform actions without any consciousness of the purpose of such actions, mere cogs in the machine of industrial production, and yet we talk of their functions in society. This assimilation of men to machines in the modern age has been used by T. S. Eliot to express the contemporary sense of futility of life. "The peculiar horror of this world is that the people in it are as much *things* as the gutter, the street, the cars, the pipes, etc." But it is obvious that in such cases we are speaking of function only in a metaphorical sense, as we may speak of the function of the steering wheel in a motor car. In short, on such a theory, poetry would itself be an effect and have other effects, but would have no more function than the stones, which are whirled down in an avalanche, have a function of crushing anything that comes its way.

This, however, is not Mr. Joad's position. He believes that the poet has a function in advancing the cause of evolution. That the poet is not conscious of any such function, we have already seen. But a still greater difficulty

must be overcome before Mr. Joad's theory can become acceptable. Not only does the poet usually exhibit no desire of conscious social service, but not infrequently, he is ill suited for effecting a betterment of life even should he so desire. He often lacks a strong social sense for reasons implicit in the analogy between art and play. More often he lacks the requisite knowledge for effecting any improvement in society, for the simple reason that such knowledge is not available. Stephen Spender has expressed it well: "It is destructive for an artist to say that he knows something which he only believes or hopes to be true. . . My argument is that as a man of action it may be necessary to assume this knowledge, but that as an artist, it is not only wrong, it is impossible to do so. It may be necessary for the purposes of organisation and confidence that revolutionary workers should adopt a belief which tells them quite positively certain things about the future. But the point is that it is not really true that people know these things, and it is the business of the artist to know it is not true. If a little bird is paralysed with the conviction that in ten minutes' time a very nice serpent which has just looked his way is going to eat him, there ought to be one minute

centre of the bird's consciousness that is aware of a million other possibilities (however much he wants to be eaten), and that centre is the artistic consciousness."

This is extremely well put, but even this does not go far enough. Even where the artist has the necessary social sense and the requisite knowledge, it would be no part of his function as a poet to undertake or engineer social reform. In fact, as we shall see later, there is something incompatible between such knowledge and its expression in a work of art. Here it is enough to point out that if the poet starts with a conscious didactic purpose, this in no way differentiates his function from that of the preacher, prophet or social reformer. Yet, does anybody dream of denying or questioning the difference that does exist between them? It need not even be doubted that the poet often does instruct, but so far as he merely *instructs*, he is not different from any of these others. Indeed, he may even be said to be not fulfilling his proper function. As soon as we have distinguished the poet from the teacher, we have recognised that there *is* a difference, and not merely of degree, between their functions. To reply that the function of the poet is to teach,

but teach through his own peculiar instrument, will not do. For if this peculiarity can be determined only in terms of poetry, the whole question will have been begged again. Mr. Joad boldly faces this predicament and in an attempt to argue away his own sense of the "paradoxical in ranking the poet, not with the artist as the creator or contemplator of a nobler and in some sense perfect world, but with the preacher and the propagandist as a grinder of axes in this one," asserts that poetry is quite distinct from music, painting and the other forms of art. In spite of his brave words, this is perhaps the *reductio ad absurdum* of his theory.

IV

Dr. I. A. Richards' theory of poetry is in some respects analogous to that criticised above. He also believes that the poet is the architect of our fate, and indeed goes much further than Mr. Joad. Mr. Joad never denies the value of science as an instrument of evolutionary purpose. But Dr. Richards is inclined to dismiss it as simply our most elaborate way of pointing to things. Nor does history or philosophy fare any better at his hands. They are at best systems of myths and "there can be no question of a return to any mythologic structure prevailing before the 17th century. The depth of the changes that then took place . . . prevents return". The result is that "countless pseudo-statements about God, about the universe, about human nature, . . . about the soul, its rank and destiny,—pseudo-statements which are pivotal points in the organisation of the mind, vital to its well-being, have suddenly become for sincere, honest and informal minds impossible to believe." In this predicament to which modern man has been brought by the dissolution

of consciousness, our only hope, according to Dr. Richards, lies in poetry. It alone is capable of saving us, for it is a perfectly possible means of overcoming chaos. Dr. Richards states the reasons for his faith: "The traditional schemes by which man gave an account of himself and the world in which he lived were made by him, and though they have lost their power to help him as they formerly helped him, he has not lost his power to make new ones." Such schemes can be created only in poetry. The modern chaos, with creeds, dogmas and traditions tumbling and crumbling all around us "is too vast a matter to be handled by that other system of myths (those of science and history) to which diagnosis belongs, and in which verification is possible. And as philosophic myths, they are not of the kind which contribute directly to a new order."

The poet then is to be the saviour of the modern world. Dr. Richards is not, however, blind to the doubts that may be entertained about his power, and re-assures us: "To put the burden of constituting an order for our minds on the poet may seem unfair. It is not the philosopher, however, or the moralist who puts it on him but birth. And it is only another

aspect of the drift by which knowledge in all its varieties—scientific, moral, religious—has come to seem a vast mythology with its sub-orders divided according to their different pragmatic sanctions that the poet should thus seem to increase so inordinately in importance. . . . If philosophic contemplation or religious experience or science gave us Reality, then poetry gave us something of less consequence, at best some sort of shadow. If we grant that all is myth, poetry as the myth-making which most brings the whole soul of man into activity . . . becomes the necessary channel for the reconstitution of order." In short, we are told, the poet is "the master of speech because he is the master of experience. . . . That amazing capacity of his for ordering speech is only a part of a more amazing capacity for ordering his experience."

When, however, we ask Dr. Richards as to how the poet is to work this modern miracle and rescue us from the chaos which seems otherwise destined to overcome us, his answer is little short of amazing. We are told that the poet can save us by inducing in us fitting attitudes to experience. Science and philosophy fail to do this, for they are concerned with reference or interpretation. It is the business of poetry to

evoke emotional attitudes which are preparations for action. The implication seems to be that we must do something to be saved, and since reference or interpretation is not in the popular mind directly concerned with action while emotions and attitudes are, it is to poetry and not to science or philosophy that we must look for our salvation.

The reasons for Dr. Richards' faith in poetry become clearer in his analysis of the different uses of language. "A statement," he tells us, "may be used for the sake of the *reference,* true or false, which it causes. This is the *scientific* use of language. But it may also be used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude produced by the reference it occasions. This is the *emotive* use of language." Again, "We may either use words for the sake of the references they promote, or we may use them for the sake of the attitudes and emotions which ensue." When words are used for the sake of reference or interpretation, we get statements and "a statement . . . is justified by its truth, i.e., its correspondence in a highly technical sense, with the fact to which it points." On the other hand, "A pseudo-statement is a form of words which is justified entirely by its effects

in releasing or organising our impulses and attitudes." In science, therefore, language is symbolic, while poetry is "the supreme form of emotive language. . . As science frees itself from the emotional outlook, and modern physics is becoming something in connection with which attitudes seem rather *de trop*, so poetry seems about to return to the conditions of its greatness by abandoning the obsession of knowledge." Lest it should raise any misgivings in our minds as to how we can act without knowledge, Dr. Richards hastens to assure us that "it is not necessary to know what things are in order to take up fitting attitudes towards them."

Such a theory easily lends itself to caricature. Shorn of all trappings, it can be reduced to the statement that poetry, since it makes only an emotive use of language, has no concern with truth. Nevertheless, its pseudo-statements can rescue the modern consciousness from the blight that threatens it by arousing the proper emotional attitudes towards reality. Poetry can do this because, "the most important amongst our attitudes could be aroused and maintained without any belief entering in it at all." Is it surprising that Max Eastman should dismiss Dr. Richards' prescription for our modern ills with

hardly concealed contempt: "There is no comfort in the suggestion of I. A. Richards that the poet can still control our destiny—as does the campaign orator—by working up emotional attitudes which we will then meekly go forth and carry into action without the pretence on either side that he has spoken the truth"?

For us, however, it would be a more profitable task to try to understand why Dr. Richards should hold such a theory at all. It seems that three distinct but related factors have combined to give to his theory its peculiar shape. There is first of all his curious misunderstanding of the nature of language, the more curious in view of his concern with it from almost the beginning of his critical studies. Secondly, there is his appreciation of and sympathy with a great deal of modern poetry which for various reasons—to be examined in greater detail later on—is "paying attention to association alone and exploiting it so thoroughly that meaning is entirely or almost entirely superseded." Thirdly, there is his assumption that in the absence of accepted beliefs shared between the author and the readers, the only attitude possible to the writer is one which consciously expresses no belief. "If there is conflict between the belief of the

man and the belief of the time in which he is living, the belief that should be positive in the man is turned negative, in its reaction to his contemporaries." From the first factor is derived the hypothesis that poetry is concerned not with truth but with emotions and attitudes. The second factor supplies Dr. Richards with instances of the actual working of such a principle while the third deepens his belief by indicating that there is no alternative explanation of the successful evocation of emotions in poetry.

The distinction between the symbolic and the emotive significance of words is a fact and has long been recognised. But to infer from this as Dr. Richards does, that "there is a complete division between the scientific use of language i.e., its use for the making of statements, true or false, and a purely aesthetic quasi-musical use which is the extreme case of what he calls the emotive use i.e., its use to evoke emotion" is to completely misunderstand the nature of language. It is surprising that Dr. Richards should commit such a mistake. It may be that in order to emphasise the element of reference and interpretation in scientific language, he had to imagine a distinction between the intellectual and the emotive phases of a man's nature far sharper

than does or can possibly exist. But he is not altogether unaware that this is a dangerous procedure. For he himself points out, "This shift in our attitude to words—from one extreme case where they are taken as conventional signs to the other extreme case where they are read as living inexhaustible meanings—has many steps." Again, in speaking of the conflicts of opinion which arise out of the treacheries of abstract language, he says, "I shall suggest that this appearance is the result of systematic linguistic illusions, arising in the course of the translation *from* the fact of mind *into* philosophic terminologies." It is exactly to such a treachery of abstract language that Dr. Richards is himself a victim.

Dr. Richards' misunderstanding is related to and in fact based upon the assumption of mathematical philosophers like Russel and Wittgenstein who hold that the essential business of a language is to assert or deny facts. By assertion or denial, they intend the symbolic representation of reality in which such representation will stand to reality as the algebraic formula of the circle to the actual circle. Obviously, all emotional co-efficients are out of place in such a theory. For these theorists, all

languages are imperfect and illogical in so far as they contain emotional filtrates. Such emotional admixtures make them deviate from universal mathematical language in which each term and relation of terms is symbolic, and therefore translatable into other terms. Apart from the difficulties about the definition of fact or the meaning of correspondence inherent in such a theory, Wittgenstein himself recognises that language is not a haphazard group of symbols but must be organised. He further admits that this organisation given in the arrangement of the symbols cannot itself be symbolised by these symbols. He also has a dim perception that there are yet other elements in experience—feelings, images and yearnings—which cannot be so symbolised. This is what Wittgenstein hints at when he says, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Since language corresponds to facts, it cannot speak of non-factual entities. Science, in which words and their relations are symbolic and abstract, can therefore give us knowledge only so far as all such elements are discarded.

Dr. Richards tacitly accepts this position. But his genuine love of poetry does not allow him to accept the logical sequel to it, namely,

that poetry which expresses something more than mere fact is an illegitimate use of language. He, therefore, seeks to escape this position by cutting emotions loose from reference. He holds that just as the business of science is to state facts, the business of poetry is to evoke emotions. His reverence for these mathematical philosophers blinds him to the real nature of language. He fails to see that language never communicates simply a dead image of external reality. In conveying the image, it simultaneously expresses an attitude towards it. Language cannot be a mere passive and colourless photograph of the universe. Its nature contradicts such a hypothesis. If it were a symbolic representation of reality—the perfect language of Wittgenstein—it would be perfectly useless. Facts simply *are* and do not require to be asserted. It is just because language expresses feeling as well as knowledge, is an evaluation as well as a representation of the facts of the world that it is of value to us. What reality is stares man in the face. If language merely expressed this, what would be its use?

Division of language into emotive and symbolic is therefore only a division in thought. Considered separately, these aspects are only

abstractions and they cannot be separated in concrete language. However determined may be our effort to drain the language of science of all emotional colouring, we can never succeed without destroying language itself. No writer or speaker ever utters a thought unless he thinks it worth uttering and immediately an element of feeling creeps into the expression. From this it follows that neither are science and art as opposed as the mathematical philosophers, and following them, Dr. Richards would have us believe.

The bifurcation of language into emotive and symbolic is therefore only a makeshift by which Dr. Richards tries to reconcile his love of poetry with his unquestioning acceptance of the logistic theory of language. This reconciliation would not, however, have been possible but for the appearance of a large number of successful modern poets whose practice seems an obvious justification of the theory. The attempt to exploit association at the cost of meaning has led to the emergence of a new school of poets who frankly exalt sound over sense. The reasons for their appearance are not far to seek. The general heterogeneity of modern civilisation and specially the differences in pace and order of development of human society have encouraged

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a growth of scepticism, not only in regard of particular beliefs, but also in the power of the human reason itself. This tendency is also manifest in the recent developments within science. In place of the well-ordered and mechanical neatness of the 19th century, we are faced to-day with a picture of the world in which imponderable and intangible elements predominate.

The general dethronement of reason has expressed itself in poetry as a discovery that meaning or prose-sense is certainly inadequate and perhaps altogether irrelevant to explain its value. The result has been that with many modern poets, meaning—in the sense of an intelligible intellectual structure—has been abandoned in favour of creating an emotional atmosphere. The unit of poetry is, however, the word, and a word to be distinguished from a mere sound must have meaning. Hence even such poetry cannot be altogether meaningless. But what happens is that the meanings of the separate words remain autonomous as opposed to the case "where the several units of meaning surrender almost all their local independence in a common co-operative purpose". In other words, in such poetry meaning is used not for its own sake but for its associative value, namely,

for calling up a retinue of images. Verbal and sound associations are used as auxiliaries to create a penumbra of feeling and evoke an atmosphere judged suitable by the poet.

The abandonment of interpretation has, however, sometimes led also to the abandonment of communication itself. Max Eastman seems justified in pointing out "that the literary tendency called 'modernist' is in reality a confusion of two tendencies: a tendency to give up interpreting experience with a tendency to cease even communicating it intelligibly." This abandonment of interpretation, though not of communication, has also been necessitated by a shift in the interest and capacity of the modern man. "The widespread increase in the aptitude of the average mind for self-dissolving introspection, the generally heightened awareness of the goings on of our minds, merely *as goings on,* not as transitions from one well-known and linguistically recognised moral or intellectual condition to another" and "the startling enhancement of our interest in the *sensory* detail and *nuance* of the visible scene as opposed to the practically useful information about things which these perceptions can give us" have been noticed by Dr. Richards. He has also noticed that

modern poets are offering in each poem a moment of life,—a rare, perfect or intense moment and nothing more. But he does not realise clearly that it is this fact that is responsible for the seeming restriction of poetry to a merely emotive use of language. We have already seen that there is, and can be no use of language that is merely emotive. An element of symbolism must enter into language unless it is to degenerate into mere noise,—sounds without significance. This shift in the interest of poets, trying to express in their poetry the mere un-interpreted sensory qualities of experience, explains why modern poetry is often difficult or even unintelligible.

This is so for two reasons. On the one hand, it is precisely experience of this type that is difficult to express in language. Communication is possible only through common agreement as to the significance of a whole system of symbols. The given-in-experience in its purity cannot therefore be expressed in words. Words are always symbolic and general, whereas such data of experience are concrete and particular. That is why the modernist poets "are going through such a variety of metagrammatical contortions" in their anxiety to express the unique quality of such experience.

The second reason is that the experience of a sensory quality invariably derives its value from its private unconscious significance. So far as such experiences are interpreted by thought, they acquire a generality which makes them accessible or intelligible to others besides the experiencer himself. When such interpretation has not been attempted or has failed, this cannot happen. If the experience is important and general, concerned with deep emotional drives or with the unchanging instincts which remain the same beneath the changing adaptations of culture, it may be communicated to the hearers even without complete interpretation. In such cases, communication triumphs over obscurity. It is common experience that poetry, painting and music deeply stir us even when we do not fully understand their significance or message. This is true of some poems even when written in a language which one knows very imperfectly. Eliot is referring to this fact when he says, "I know that some of the poetry to which I am most devoted is poetry which I did not understand at the first reading ; some is poetry which I am not sure I understand yet ; for instance Shakespeare".

If, however, the experience is unimportant or

peculiar to the poet, the poem becomes a sort of collective monologue. There is a failure of communication, for communication is not intended at all. The poem is a mere pretext for an inward dwelling upon experience which for personal and private reasons has a value for the poet. We may regard such poetry as a great new conquest of literature over the unexplored land of ordinary human consciousness. We may think such poetry the result of the emergence of new modes of perception which human consciousness did not have before. Or with Caudwell we may hold that with the decay of capitalism, "modern poetry grows barer and barer of life, of real social content and the only word values usable by poetry become increasingly personal until poetry is altogether esoteric and private". We can easily recall to our minds passages from Gertrude Stein or James Joyce which are explicable only on such hypothesis.

Perhaps even these considerations would not have sufficed to persuade Dr. Richards to accept the divorce of meaning from poetry. He seems fully conscious that "the bond . . . between metre and poetry which remains unintelligible so long as we separate words from their meanings and treat them as mere signs fitted into a sensory

pattern becomes an evident necessity if we consider the words as invested with their meanings. With words so invested, their metrical movement is no longer so distant a thing as a *counterpart* to their meaning . . . The movement of the verse becomes the movement of the meaning." He even goes so far as to say, "I would suggest seriously that in the greater poems of great poets, the ideas there brought into being in the mind are completer, not less complete ; and that the process which extricates them by abstraction denatures them rather than develops them."

This eminently reasonable position is, however, one to which Dr. Richards cannot stick for long on account of its implications in respect of poetic belief. He sees clearly that meaning brings with it questions of truth and falsity, and raises the problem of attitude on the part of the reader and the poet. Is it possible to appreciate a poem whose contents conflict with our deepest belief? On the other hand, must a poem be good simply because it gives expression to our innermost feelings? In a unified culture or civilisation, there is a common ground of agreed beliefs and these problems do not arise with the same force. Writers there use, often without

being conscious of the fact, the common beliefs of their time as the scaffolding of their poetry. But we live to-day in a world of decaying beliefs. The great diversity in our current intellectual tradition, the sharp opposition between its different branches, the quick changes and the discontinuity in the processes by which the transitions between them are made,—all these have combined to destroy the common world of belief which formerly held between the poet and his audience. In such a social context, is it surprising that poets should try to find their inspiration in pure lyricism, in the impulse to sing of the joys and sorrows of life cut off from all theorising or opinion? Since there are *no* beliefs that have general social currency, poets tend to fall back upon their own experience and replace the social world of art by the personal world of private phantasy.

This collapse of traditions and beliefs explains why modern poetry is essentially lyric and even the longer poems are merely a number of lyrics strung together. Coleridge attempted to justify this without entering into the question as to why it should be so: "In short, whatever specific import we attach to the word poetry, there will be found involved in it as a necessary consequence

that a poem of any length neither can be nor ought to be all poetry." A more militant proclamation of the severance of poetry from belief or attitude is to be found in Poe. "It has been assumed tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly that the ultimate object of all poetry is truth. . . . We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force:—but the simple fact is that . . . there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified—more supremely noble than this very poem—the poem *per se*—this poem which is a poem and nothing more." But the symbolists have gone further still. In the words of Arthur Symons, "To evoke by some elaborate instantaneous magic of language, without the formality of an after all impossible description, to *be* rather than to *express*: that is what Mallarmé has consistently, and from the first, sought in verse and prose."

This recourse to lyricism culminates in surrealism. Social consciousness is sacrificed for the sake of private unconscious significance. Yet, such sacrifice is inevitable in the context of

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modern civilisation with its many and warring beliefs. Of the three attitudes possible to the poet in a world of decadent and discordant beliefs, two immediately evoke antagonism and opposition and are extremely unfavourable to poetic receptivity. A poet who expresses a private individualist belief may find that he has no audience, if his belief is so far removed from the current dogmas of the age that it can rouse no emotional response in his readers. On the other hand, the closer his beliefs approximate to the temper of his times, the more insistent become considerations of practical bearing on the acceptance or rejection of his poetry. It is judged by the acceptability or otherwise of its beliefs,—not by its poetic quality or merit. Likewise with the writer who interprets an existing or foretells a future belief. The further removed are his beliefs from the actual faith of the times, the less emotional significance have they for the average mind. The nearer they are to his superstitions and prejudices, the less able is he to value them as poems. The content of belief in them intrudes upon his consciousness to prevent poetic appraisement. The poet's only possible alternative then seems to be to cut poetry asunder from beliefs and

concentrate on the evocation of emotions without worrying about their acceptance or rejection. This, suggests Dr. Richards, is the secret of Eliot's success in his Waste Land. This also explains why Dr. Richards insists that poetry must discard significance, for meaning brings with it the demand for belief or disbelief. Once the poet eschews concern with all conscious belief, the emotive use of language in poetry will do the rest, for have we not been told that "it is not necessary to know what things are in order to take up fitting attitudes towards them"?

Dr. Richards' theory of poetry is thus based upon a misunderstanding of the nature of language, and re-inforced by his perception that in spite of obscurity, poetry is often able to evoke in us a strong emotional attitude which feels like belief. The impulse to such misunderstanding must, however, be sought in the utilitarian urge which makes him delegate to the poet the task of saving the world. Knowledge in the strict sense of the term is the concern of philosophy and science, and they attempt to eschew emotion as far as possible. Poetry, which obviously has something to do with emotion, must therefore abandon knowledge and yet evoke in us fitting attitudes towards reality.

This it can do, for it is only through the imagination that we come into contact with reality. Like poetry, philosophy, science and religion also deal in myths, and the only difference is that poetry is "the mythmaking which most brings the whole soul of man into activity." Man's apprehension of reality in science, religion or philosophy is therefore less complete than in poetry, though it might have a greater apparent clarity and definiteness. Poetry thus becomes for Dr. Richards the vehicle through which still undiscovered aspects of reality reveal themselves to man. He does not, like Mr. Joad, explicitly recognise it as an instrument of evolutionary purpose, but nevertheless this is what his theory really implies. Once this inner motive of his theory is realised, all the arguments against the position of Mr. Joad apply equally to that of Dr. Richards.

POETRY KATHARSIS AND CREATIVITY

Poetry Katharsis and Creativity

The utilitarian heresy about poetry and its function is difficult to kill. Denied in one form, it reasserts itself in another. The didactic theory insists that the function of the poet is to reform the world. If this is denied, it is replaced by a subtler theory which recognises that the poet, even if he does reform, does not intend to do so and is often incapable of doing so. It defines the function of the poet, not as the solution of the problems of life, but as the evocation of their consciousness in the mind of man. This is variously expressed as an enlargement of personality or a heightening of consciousness. The implication is that increased acquaintance with reality extends the range of experience and enlarges our personality. This is perhaps what Matthew Arnold intended when he spoke of poetry as educating and liberalising the emotions. Such increased acquaintance may be the result of one or both of two alternative processes: by

bringing within experience elements which were formerly altogether outside its ken or by increasing the intensity of attention so that new features are discovered in what we have formerly regarded as familiar objects. The function of poetry is the achievement of this heightened consciousness. The true business of the poet is not to preach but to increase knowledge, not to dictate dogmatic rules for the conduct of life, but to make men aware of life and the world and their intricate interrelations and nexuses. Out of a better understanding, a richer and fuller life is thus made possible. But all this is merely to re-interpret the term 'instruction' in a broader sense, and in no way avoids the difficulties of the cruder theory. Granting that the poet does seek to make men more conscious about the problems of life, so do the preacher and the prophet. Wherein do their activities differ as instruction? It may be said that the distinction lies in their respective motives. The prophet and the preacher draw our attention to the evils of life in order to move us to remedy them. The poet's function is exhausted by merely presenting them to our heightened consciousness.

We need not ask here whether such sharp division between theory and practice is possible.

In the case of the prophet and the priest, knowledge is a prepaedeutic to action. A heightened consciousness of existing evils directly leads to attempts at their removal. In the case of the poet, this heightened consciousness is an end in itself. If reforms follow from such increase in knowledge, these are by-products not consciously aimed at by the poet. This theory tries to bring back the element of disinterestedness emphasised by the assimilation of art to play. The recognition of this element marks the measure of superiority of such formulation over the cruder didactic theories of Mr. Joad or Dr. Richards. It must, however, be pointed out that even this subtler variation of the utilitarian theory fails to define with precision the function of the poet.

That the poet does, through his greater insight and sensitiveness, actually direct attention to aspects of reality hitherto unobserved need not be doubted. Yet at the same time, it does not in any way seem to be part of his function to desire to do so. This is precisely the meaning of disinterestedness of art. Even if we call it disinterested increase of knowledge, this does not sufficiently distinguish poetry from other recognised activities and processes of the human

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mind. In science also, we have this disinterested increase of knowledge. In poetry, there is a heightening of consciousness through depth of experience or intensity of feeling. In science, the same results are achieved through extensity of experience and large generalisation. Poetry concentrates on intrinsic feeling tone and neglects the perceptual reference of experience. External reality does not disappear but is subordinated to the subjective needs of such experience. Science concentrates on the perceptual reference and neglects the feeling tone of experience. Feeling tone does not disappear but is subordinated to the objective laws of perceived reality. There is no poetry, if the poet's feeling tone is so esoteric that it evokes no response in the mind of his audience. There is no science, if the perceptual reference is so private that no body but the scientist has access to it. A common affective world is as much the condition of poetry as a common perceptual reality is that of science. A few sur-realists may say, "Sur-realism now aims at recreating a condition which will be in no way inferior to mental derangement. Its ambition is to lead us to the edge of madness and make us feel what is going on in the magnificently disordered minds

of those whom the community shuts up in asylums." No body else has sought in lunatics the greatest poets and scientists of the world.

Transcendence of privacy is therefore equally necessary for art and science. In fact, it is the obverse of their disinterestedness. It also indicates why they are both concerned with the new, with just those features of experience whose feeling tone or perceptual reference has not as yet entered into the common consciousness of man. Science attempts an enlargement of personality by a more complex insight into outer reality. Its aim is to bring within the grasp of our intellect continually increasing fields of perceptual reference. Poetry attempts a heightening of consciousness by a more intimate experience of inner reality. It discovers to our imagination an endless universe of feeling tones. Science is not interested in data which have already been explained. Poetry is not interested in experiences that have already been expressed. So far as they result in a disinterested increase of knowledge, poetry and science cannot therefore be distinguished, and with slight modification, this would apply also in the case of philosophy. A purely instructional theory of poetic function fails no less than a mere hedonistic account.

II

The Aristotelian doctrine of mimesis is perhaps the subtlest form which the utilitarian theory of art has achieved. We have already seen how Plato condemned all poetry that was imitative. In his opinion, such poetry, through the undue excitation of feelings, renders people less able to face the vicissitudes of life. In practical life, we are bound to appraise emotions by the standard of resultant action. Plato applies to poetry the same test and concludes that, judged by its effect on conduct, poetry has no right to exist. Aristotle attempted to justify poetry against Plato's attack but his thought could not fully transcend the Platonic categories. Like Plato, he also thought of art as a craft and shared with his master the belief that poetry must be justified by results. Their difference arose in the estimation of these results. Plato held that tragedy is detrimental to the practical life of the audience because it generates in them the emotions of pity and fear. Aristotle believed that tragedy made the audience better fitted to face the problems of life, for it exercised and

discharged these emotions in the experience of watching it. They therefore agree in holding that the function of the poet is to generate socially valuable emotions. They only differ in their judgment about the actual achievement of the poet.

Aristotle shared Plato's conception of the function of poetry and yet his theory shows a better understanding of its real nature. Even while he accepted the Platonic doctrine of mimesis or imitation about the nature of poetry, he gave to it a new twist by defining mimesis in a novel way. For Plato, mimesis meant mimicry and hence his conclusion that art is not worthwhile. But his conclusion overlooked two facts. If art is nothing but imitation of the real, why has the world since the beginning of history continued to hold it in such esteem? The fact that men take art seriously and look upon it as something more than a mere curiosity or an ingenious toy becomes a problem which Plato's theory cannot explain. Secondly, one may think, though wrongly, of mimesis in painting as mimicry and perhaps one may even stretch it to cover some types of poetry. But what about music or architecture or dancing in which the imitation of actual object is a negligible

quantity? The Platonic theory demands that either these be excluded from the definition of art, or mimesis be defined to mean something more than mere mimicry or even literal representation.

This was the point at which Aristotle took his departure. By assimilating poetry to music and dancing, he immediately suggests that the nature of mimesis in poetry is not and cannot be mimicry. Poetry imitates not life but a conception of life. In the words of Professor Abercrombie, "Plato took imitation to be the connection between poetry and nature which leaves quite unexplained the characteristic quality and energy of poetry (whether in verse or in prose, whether an epic or a novel). Aristotle with far finer discrimination saw that the connection effected by imitation is not between poetry and the world without, but falls wholly within the being of poetry."

Once this slight alteration in the conception of mimesis is made, it is easy for Aristotle to refute Plato's condemnation of poetry. He finds the social justification of poetry in the fact that it effects a katharsis of the emotions it arouses. What exactly Aristotle meant by katharsis we can never know. He never explains it fully and

the result is that one may read into it any meaning one likes. It is useful to consider some of these interpretations and for two reasons. Apart from the intrinsic interest of some of these interpretations, such consideration helps us to realise that the function of art cannot be explained by analogy with craft. The rejection of a utilitarian interpretation of katharsis will also throw more light on the nature of mimesis and thus help us to understand the nature of art itself.

One may hold that the emotions evoked are worked out or purged in the experience of the tragedy itself. After the tragedy is over, the mind of the audience is left, not burdened with terror and pity, but lightened of them. Just as a purgative concentrates and drives out of the body its undesirable products, poetry effects the homoeopathic purgation of pity and fear by the administration of these very emotions. The tragic poet who made Athenians despondent by representing the sad fate of their fellow Hellenes in Persia was punished. This fact no doubt strengthens the argument in favour of a medical interpretation of katharsis, but it must be admitted that in the end the interpretation fails. Aristotle speaks of ecstatic music curing persons

already possessed of ecstasy. But there is no real analogy between such cure and the katharsis of tragedy. Unlike ecstatic music curing an already existing ecstasy, tragedy, in order to be curative, must first produce the disease it is meant to cure. Spectators do not go into the theatre already possessed of fear, anxiety and grief. These unpleasant emotions are aroused by tragedy. Further, the audience not only goes away feeling the better for the experience but enjoys it, and to such an extent that it repeats such experience time after time.

The medical analogy thus breaks down at many points. On the one hand, medicine is not administered to a healthy person, but to one who is already afflicted with the disease. It may be argued that the medicine is in the nature of an inoculation to achieve immunity from disease. By arousing in us emotions which in real life would be unpleasantly and perhaps dangerously disturbing, tragedy prepares us to meet such situations with proper responses. But this argument fails, for it overlooks the fact that we *enjoy* such experience. No body enjoys medicine for its own sake. Katharsis, whether it means inoculation or homoeopathic purgation, fails to account for our enjoyment of art. Again,

medicine may restore health, but can hardly be regarded as a condition for making us feel better than we were before the illness. Finally, it is extremely doubtful if the emotions evoked by tragedy are completely discharged in the experience. Is it not common knowledge that poetry effects a permanent refinement of the sentiments and increases both the range and acuteness of our responses?

Nor will it do to assimilate katharsis to Freud's therapy by abreaction. As Caudwell has pointed out, "This is on the one hand an over-refinement of Aristotle and on the other hand a misunderstanding of what therapy by abreaction actually is. Poetic creations, like other phantasies, may be the vehicle of neurotic conflicts or complexes. But phantasy is the cloak whereby the 'censor' hides the unconscious complex. So far from this process being kathartic, it is the opposite according to Freud's own principles. To cure the basic complex by abreaction, the phantasy must be stripped of its disguise and the infantile and archaic kernel laid bare."

The poetic construct, according to Freud's own empirical discoveries, cannot therefore represent an abreactive therapy even for the

poet. But Aristotle visualises tragedy as kathartic not only for the poet, *but also for the spectators.* Even if the poetic phantasy did have an abreactive effect on the poet, it is unlikely that it should do so on every spectator. It is impossible that all the members of the audience should have not only the same complex as the poet but the same associations. Empirical tests show that no two neurotics have exactly the same complex while analysis shows that the associations behind the complex are generally highly personal.

The attempt to explain katharsis by analogy with religious purification fares no better. For one thing, Aristotle—whenever he talks of katharsis—alludes to the mere fact of rousing anxiety and grief. There is never any suggestion of the purification of these emotions, nor is it clear what exactly the purification of an emotion can mean. Does it mean the isolation of a feeling by discarding all extraneous qualities and associations? A pure feeling in this sense is a logical abstraction and can never be an experienced fact. Aristotle always speaks of pity and fear in combination. The juxtaposition itself shows that Aristotle at any rate was not thinking of a single isolated feeling. Does

purification mean the diversion of feeling from all considerations of self-interest so that the feeling is enjoyed for its own sake? If by katharsis Aristotle meant such disinterested experience of an emotion, it would enable him to explain why experiences which in real life are painful and evil become in art noble and exhilarating. Such katharsis is perhaps an essential element in all art, and it may also liberalise the emotions it evokes, but it can be called purification only by an abuse of language.

Katharsis in this sense is very similar to the sublimation of modern psycho-analysis and must yet be distinguished from it. Both result in a resolution, generally temporary and partial, of the conflict between man's instincts and his environment. In both, feelings attached to these instincts are diverted from their immediate practical objectives. But here their similarity ends. In katharsis, this diversion takes place without any deliberate or conscious planning on the part of the agent. In sublimation, it need not be unconscious. In sublimation, there is an element of escapism. It is an adaptation of instinct to environment, but in the adaptation the nature of the instinct is disguised or even distorted. Further, the feeling accompanying

the instinct is switched to some new objective and is not self-contained. In the katharsis of art, there is no escapism. The contradiction between the instincts and the environment is solved, not by switching off the emotions into some new channel, but by insulating them from all contact with the environment itself. Hence the emotion becomes its own objective and neither requires nor permits any distortion. In sublimation, there may be an element of chance but the perfect interrelation of elements in art is the result of a creative effort. Hence, sublimation may be noble and unselfish, but cannot be disinterested. The katharsis of art need not be unselfish or noble, but it is disinterested.

This conception of katharsis would also explain why even the ugly and the imperfect can be the object of art. Mimesis is seen to be, not a mimicry of life, but an expression of the imagination. A feeling tone of experience is seized on by the mind of the poet. Detached from its relations with practical life, it is enjoyed for its own sake. This imaginative enjoyment, not practical utilisation, is what is expressed in art. In actual life, any object of which we are aware calls into action, often without our being conscious of it, a set of instinctive reactions and

their accompanying emotions. Thus the sight of a mad dog produces in us—generally without our conscious interference—the emotion of fear and the tendency to run away. But in imaginative life, the conative part of our reaction to sensation is cut out. The result is that the emotional and perceptual aspects of the experience are apprehended much more clearly than in normal practical life. We become "true spectators, not selecting what we will see, but seeing everything equally, and thereby we come to notice a number of appearances and relation of appearances, which would have escaped our notice before, owing to that perpetual economising by selection of what impressions we will assimilate, which in life we perform by unconscious processes". It is this vision of the whole, not of elements necessary for the requirements of practical life, that art seeks to express. In one sense, it is imitation of the real, but in another sense it is not. Our perception of the real is always selective and determined by the necessities of existence. Artistic vision transcends such utilitarian selection of the real.

Aristotle's doctrine of mimesis and katharsis, on the interpretation suggested above, indicates freedom and disinterestedness as the essence of

art. Such mimesis expresses our imaginative vision, the experience of an event complete in itself and undistorted by the demands of conformity to practical needs. History which relates what has actually happened has neither beginning nor end. We can never exhaust all the antecedents or consequents of any single event. Hence, an element of irrationality or chance must remain in our historical representation of facts. It is this element Aristotle has in mind when he talks of poetry as a nobler and more philosophical thing than history. In the mimesis of art, every element is in a focus of relationship with everything else in it. That is why in art we get, "not merely a flashing accidental moment of unified experience, but a prolonged continuous series of moments securely and infallibly organising their own perfect system of interrelationship, and thereby manifesting the only significance which is absolutely necessary to our minds,—the revelation of law and order in things."

The function of mimesis is to give to experience this significance. As we have already seen, it is an imitation, not of actual life, but of the imagination of life. The analogy of this with children's play is also evident, for children

when left to themselves never indulge in mere mimicry of what they see. Their activity consists in expressing the mental images that make up their own imaginative life. Katharsis also is seen, not as a therapeutic device, whether by purgation, abreaction or inoculation, nor as a religious purification, nor a psycho-analytical sublimation. It is seen to be the counterpart to mimesis—the enjoyment of experience for its own sake and uninfluenced by the necessity of any responsive action. Conscious experience is itself pleasant, and to gain experience simply as such is a great gain in pleasure. When the experience is significant, it is a greater gain. Mimesis provides us with vivid imagination of significant experience and katharsis is our ability to withhold the act at the height of energy and enjoy experience for its own sake.

Such interpretation of mimesis and katharsis would take Aristotle's theory of art outside the utilitarian heresy. It would also liberate art from craft. It is, however, difficult to hold that this was Aristotle's intention for, in the end, he justifies poetry by social utility. Like Plato, he judges poetry by the effect of the emotions aroused by art in the purposes of actual life, though unlike Plato he holds this effect to be

salutary and valuable. Whether valuable or not, such theory errs fundamentally in its attitude towards the nature and function of art. This can be seen most clearly in Tolstoy whose position may be regarded as a *reductio ad absurdum* of attempts to regard poetry as a guide to action. Tolstoy in modern times uses the Platonic-Aristotelian test and with results that are disastrous. His attempt to judge art by its moral efficacy leads him to condemn the whole of Michael Angelo, Raphael and Titian and most of Beethoven, not to mention nearly everything he has himself written, as bad or false art. In the end, he is forced to admit that examples of morally desirable, and therefore good art, are to be found for the most part amongst works of inferior quality. He does not, however, see that this is a tacit admission that art must be judged by some standard other than morality. A work of art cannot be judged by its reaction on life or its practical efficacy. But this is a truth which neither Aristotle nor Plato nor Tolstoy could see on account of their utilitarian bias. We have also seen the straits to which Dr. Richards, in spite of all his love of poetry, has been brought by this prejudice in favour of poetry's practical value.

III

The function of a thing is its nature considered dynamically. Hence, the discovery of the nature of poetry would simultaneously define its function. The first step towards such discovery must be an attempt to distinguish poetry from other types of human experience. We have already seen that it is an activity and further that it is a disinterested activity. It is activity undirected towards any definite or set objective. We have also seen that this is a characteristic which it shares with science and a great deal of ordinary cognitive experience. The world would be a dismal place indeed if no body ever did anything except for some set or preconceived end. We may well ask how this end itself is to be determined. It is not enough to say that the end is determined by the struggle for existence, for this would pre-suppose the desire to survive. Life is not therefore merely an adaptation to stimuli received from outside. It is also a reservoir of stimuli that go out and seek the environment for adapting it to its own uses. As Max Eastman puts it, "We are not merely trying

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to adapt ourselves in order to stay alive but we are trying even more energetically to live. Everything we do and think is not a reaction, a great deal of it is action. . . We do things not only because we have a sensation but also in order to make a sensation. And so do the most elementary organisms. Any rubber ball can react but it requires life to act. And life does act. It seeks experience.''

Disinterestedness or absence of conscious purpose cannot therefore differentiate poetry from science or ordinary cognitive experience with sufficient distinctness. One difference between them is, however, evident to even a superficial analysis. Whatever be the relation of the knower to the known, scientific and ordinary cognitive experience both assume that the object of knowledge was there waiting to be discovered. In poetic experience, the object is the product of creative imagination and this in a sense different from that of the other instances. Ordinary cognitive consciousness assumes the independent pre-existence of the objects of knowledge. It further assumes that the nature of these objects is exactly what such consciousness assumes it to be. This is the point of view of commonsense, but reflection on the inter-relations of objects soon

disturbs the equanimity of commonsense. The scientific point of view emerges. Like commonsense, it holds that the object of knowledge has an independent pre-existence. Unlike commonsense, it does not identify the nature of the object with what is revealed in ordinary experience. The scientific point of view is also not free from dogmatism, though in recent years the uncertainties of physics has made it more humble than before. In a word, for both commonsense and the scientific point of view thought is intentional. It refers to and is governed by the nature and content of thought. Poetic thought, if thought it can be called, is on the contrary creative. It brings into being objects which, however independent they may be once they have come into existence, could not have existed at all but for the activity of the poet. In fact, one may go even further and hold that the object of poetic experience requires for its existence not only the activity of the poet but also that of his audience. But this must await further explication.

It might no doubt be argued that knowledge, scientific or empirical, equally presupposes the activity of the knower. But there is one important difference. The presupposition of all scientific and empirical knowledge is that in such

cases the object is independent of and distinct from the activity by which it is apprehended. The nature of the object determines the mind and resists all attempts of the mind to alter or change it. But in the case of poetic experience there is no such immutable law. There is no doubt a logic of development in the sphere of poetry as well, but this logic does not confine us to one sole alternative out of a set. Truth is only one, but beauty may have various forms. We know or do not know the truth about a thing and in either case there is an end of the matter. But in spite of formal finality, there is no such absoluteness about the beauty of a thing. We may each find it beautiful in our own way and the same person may find it beautiful in different ways at different times. How otherwise can one explain the appreciation of Wordsworth's Lucy poems or Shelley's West Wind by persons of tender age as well as those who are mature in experience and thought? The case of Shakespeare is an even more glaring instance. We can imagine a poem or a picture as otherwise from what it is and yet beautiful. It is only those who have neither experience nor comprehension of art that clamour about the inevitability of a line or a word or a note. It certainly is

inevitable in that painting, poem or music. But all artists know that it might have been different and yet the work would remain a work of art, though naturally a different work of art.

Here then we have a clue to the function of the poet,—to create in a sense altogether different from all other human activities. Though an element of creation is involved even in the lowest forms of human perception, the creation of the poet is distinguished by freedom and fluidity. If this distinction is denied, poetry has to face the risk of collapse back into life. One may agree with Coleridge that the secondary imagination gives us, not only poetry in the limited sense with which literary critics concern themselves, but all those other aspects of the world which invest it with beauty, love and awe. Every awareness for which a civilised life is preferred by us to an uncivilised may be the result of the activity of the imagination. But this only points to a fact which has been obvious at least since the days of Kant. There can be no experience without the operation of imagination, a blind but indispensable faculty of the mind. We may even hold with Dr. Richards that all objects "which we can name or otherwise single out—the simplest objects of the senses and the most

recondite entities that speculation can conjecture, the most abstract constructions of the intellect. and the most concrete aims of passion—alike are projections of man's interest''. We realise in despair that the very generality of Imagination's creative power in these activities points to its futility as a principle for defining poetry.

The definition of the function of the poet as creativity has therefore to be further developed and amplified. The poet cannot and does not create something out of nothing. The matter of poetic creation is supplied by the crude experience of day to day. This again brings out the similarity of poetic to cognitive experiences. It becomes necessary to explain in what way objective presentation to the mind by an act of creative imagination distinguishes the content of poetry from that of cognition. By poetic creation we do not mean merely the construction of the non-existent or the non-experienced. Even if it be possible to mistake such construction as an act of creative imagination, it is not possible to regard the result as an objective presentation. Still less can poetic creation mean the embodiment of something which is impossible of realisation in the actual world. That which is impossible would not only be incapable of

objective presentation, it would also violate the fundamental unity of art which is derived from and a reflection of the unity of all experience. These are mountains which even poetic faith cannot move. There is room in art for the unusual or even the unlikely, but not for the impossible. Where the unlikely occurs in poetry, such occurrence does not constitute its poetic character. It is poetry not on account of, but in spite of the unlikelihood contained in it.

Equally, poetic creation cannot be the mere reflection of what we regard as the actual. This might be objective presentation but would not be an act of creative imagination. Apart from the difficulties of defining the actual, such an attitude would lack in the disinterestedness which is an essential element in art. Clive Bell may be guilty of exaggeration when he says, "the representative element can do the picture no good and it may do it harm," but there is undoubtedly an element of truth in the remark. Emphasis on the representative element would call out one or both of two types of mental attitudes. Verisimilitude tends to evoke conative responses and induces a practical attitude of the mind. The tendency to run away from a mad dog in real life is immediate. A sufficiently

accurate representation would produce the same effect. The fright of small children before the painting or still more the cinematographic representation of a tiger further illustrates this. Verisimilitude also calls into being an intellectual judgment, a comparison of the representation with its original. This immediately emphasises the cognitive aspects of the experience and destroys its disinterestedness and freedom. In brief, poetic creation is neither a hypostasis of the unreal nor an image of the actual in a mental looking-glass.

The differentia of poetic imagination, we suggested earlier, is freedom and fluidity. Its fluidity is, in fact, a corollary to its freedom. The practical attitude of the mind is not free. It is dominated by immediate purposes which must be fulfilled in the real world. Its freedom is therefore limited in two directions. The purposes are either the expression of a blind instinctive drive as in the case of satisfaction of hunger and sex or the projection in the individual mind of common social ideals. In either case, the fundamental fact about them is biologic or social causality. This holds even when the purpose expresses itself as a revolt against the existing social standards. The element of

compulsion in the practical attitude is not, however, confined only to the subjective. The compulsion of the objective world of perceptual reference is still more insistent. Our purposes come up against the obstacles set up by the objective world, and can be satisfied only so far as the nature of the objective allows. Adaptation of the self to the real or of the real to the self are merely the opposed aspects of this compulsion of the objective.

The practical attitude of the mind is therefore doubly unfree. But the same thing applies also to the judgment of the intellect. In cognition, whether of science or of commonsense, thought, as we have already seen, is intentional. It refers to, and is governed by the nature of the content of thought. This in itself brings an element of compulsion into all thought activities. The compulsion of thought naturally raises a problem of belief. Belief suggests the practical attitude and all that it connotes. But even if the implications of practice be ignored, the problem of belief reveals the all-pervasive character of compulsion in thought. The indifference of the nature of its content is a necessary but not an adequate presupposition of thought. There must be the

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further assumption that this content is an element in a continuous system which is equally indifferent to the activity of our thought. A hallucinatory object is a content of thought and seems indifferent to its activity. It does not, however, belong to a system of intentional thought and is therefore rejected as hallucinatory. The compulsion of the content of thought in its isolation is expressed in the law of identity, its compulsion as an element in a system by the law of uniformity of Nature.

In both the cognitive and the conative attitudes, the imagination is therefore unfree. It is dominated by the nature of perceptual reality whose awareness is the beginning of experience. Further, the element of compulsion is in both cases derived from the presupposition of the systematic character of this perceptual world. In both, we seem to face a rigid and closed universe which has an independent life of its own. Cognition and conation are both attempts to share in that life, but in order to do so, we must obey its laws. These laws are the expression of the nature of the system itself. From the cognitive or the conative point of view, an element revealed in experience is not merely itself, but is tied by invisible chains with the

rest of the real world. Such experience is therefore never complete or autonomous, and has neither beginning nor end. Every event is related to infinite antecedents and infinite consequences.

Poetry achieves freedom and fluidity by its liberation from the chain of endless causality. Poetic creation therefore lies in seeing a thing as an individual whole, not an element in a system of reality. Our actual experience of events and things is fragmentary in character. We feel the existence of relations and connections without becoming fully cognisant of them. Not that we can ever achieve complete knowledge of either the element or the system. Though given as fact, every element is given as existing by reference to something else. "Living by relation to what it excludes, it transcends its limits to join another element and invites that element within its own boundaries. But with edges ragged and wavering, that flow outward and inward unstably, it already is lost." And as for the system, "the series of phenomena is so infected with relativity that while it is itself it can never be made absolute. Its existence refers itself to what is beyond and did it not do so, it would cease to exist. A last fact, a final link

is not merely a thing which we cannot know but a thing which could not possibly be real. Our chain by its nature cannot have a support. Its essence excludes a fastening at the end. We do not merely fear that it hangs in the air but we know it must do so. And when the end is unsupported all the rest is unsupported."

IV

The scientist attempts to unravel relations and connections between elements of experience out of pragmatic interest. His main business is not to understand and state what they are, but to interpret and state how they ought to be conceived in order to generalise their important relations to other things and be able to predict or control their behaviour. The scientist cannot avoid interpretation and organisation of experience from the point of view of purpose, individual or social, even if he wants to. The very language he uses for his science is shot through and through with such interpretation and organisation. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that we cannot even allude to an experience without interpreting it. And science is the attempt to carry this interpretation to its logical conclusion. The scientist is only interested in the relation of a selected piece or aspect of reality to the world from which it is drawn. His attention is so concentrated upon the relations that he often loses sight of the thing itself. In his analysis, the details become so important

that the whole is to him merely the uninteresting aggregate of interesting parts. Even his theory which seeks to unite and bind the parts into a whole is concerned more with the relations of the parts to one another and to the whole than with the character of the system or totality in which they inhere.

This concentration upon the relations of elements of reality betrays the origin of science in the practical needs of life. For action, concentration on the relevant elements is not only helpful but indispensable. A hunter fighting a wild animal must not allow his attention to wander from the immediate object of killing it. To notice the beauty of its form or grace of its movement would be worse than useless, it would be fatal. This practical origin expresses itself in the concern of science with some exclusive aspect of reality. It studies the relations between different elements of reality from the point of view of a definite purpose. Whatever is not relevant to that purpose, is of no interest to it. This explains why a science is an exclusive study of the behaviour of a particular aspect of phenomena. The fragmentary character of science is a necessary consequence of its practical origin.

The ordinary man also is interested in the relations of things to this systematic reality of which they are parts. This systematic world is a necessary assumption of his experience, but he is not generally consciously aware of it. He senses the presence of the parts and the whole and their inter-relations, but he does so only imperfectly and confusedly. So far as he is dimly aware of the world to which the things and their relations belong, it may be said that he sees more than the scientist. His vision is, however, weak and uncertain. He often tends to overlook or even forget the relations between the things. The particulars often exhaust his interest and energy. He forgets that even in order to deal with the particular, he must go beyond them and attempt a vision of the world of which they are parts.

A sensitive perception of the situation no doubt often evokes the right response, but so long as this response is blind and unreasoned, a man is apt to be misled by some chance and unessential aspect of the situation before him. If on the other hand, he is conscious of the principle of unity among the diverse elements, the details are evaluated with reference to their place in the scheme. The diverse elements that experience

presents to him occur again and again, but always with a difference. Not unoften, it is the difference which is the most important factor for his consideration. This combination of repetition and novelty makes it the more necessary to classify experiences for future reference and appropriate response. Dependence on the intuition of the moment, without the consciousness of any underlying principle, may and often does lead to right action, but it carries in itself no assurance of right decision amidst the complexities of life. Further, it is essentially atomic in character and throws into relief the uniqueness and isolation rather than the common humanity of the common man. This tends to hamper the progress of society. There is no generalisation of the experience of the community in order to warrant the projection of individual minds into unexplored regions from some permanent and consolidated basis. That is why man cannot rest content with the point of view of commonsense. He seeks for partial uniformities even at the cost of losing sight of the whole. In science, he organises his knowledge of aspects of reality and expresses it in generalised principles that supply a common standard of comparison. This also ensures the possibility of progress through

the enrichment of individual consciousness by the accumulated experience of the community, but in achieving this, scientific knowledge becomes highly specialised and abstract.

The ordinary man, we may then say, stands midway between the scientist and the poet. The scientist's main interest is in the relations obtaining between different aspects of reality with a view to predicting and controlling behaviour. Hence his concern is with the general features of experience. Those aspects in it which are unique do not interest him. The poet's main concern is with the object of experience in isolation from its practical or cognitive implications. He is therefore indifferent to those generalised features of experience which constitute its value to the scientist. He finds his delight in those elements in it which make it the unique experience it is. And there is no denying that every one of our experiences is unique. It is made what it is by the fact that it is our experience and ours in a special context of thought and feeling, a context from which it cannot be abstracted without some loss of quality. Hence, something of what goes to make it what it is must be lost when we attempt to recreate it even to ourselves, while to communicate it fully to another is

perhaps altogether impossible. Yet we must make the attempt under penalty of utter isolation if we fail: and there is nothing man dreads more than the curse of solitude. Human society is itself the result of this impulse to transcend the limits of mere individuality. To recognise identity persisting among heterogeneous surroundings, to abstract from, refer to or construct systems are all attempts to build up through love, religion and knowledge a common life. The scientist emphasises and at times even exaggerates the elements necessary for such transcendence. The poet's concern is with the complexity of contents in their uniqueness—with the given-in-experience—so that even the spatio-temporal co-efficients are charged with a new value. The ordinary man gets along by shifting his emphasis from the one to the other aspect of experience.

Every one of our experiences is therefore in one sense unique and the artist is interested in it as unique. The abandonment of both the practical and the cognitive points of view liberates it from the iron chain of necessity. It is no longer a mere bubble in a dissolving flux, with ragged and wavering edges merging into other bubbles of a similar nature. Released from the unceasing process of change, it loses

the fragmentary character which knowledge and practice discover in every experience. This fragmentary character is enhanced by space and time. Time is known only as an order of change and space as its receptacle. The grounding of experience in systematic reality is necessary as a background of cognitive and practical activity. Liberation of experience from space and time is at the same time a conquest of the flux of space and time. Art which expresses this freedom of experience is therefore timeless and changeless. Immutability of art is the expression of its immunity from the causal order.

To see experience as unique and unrelated is to see it as a whole. Spinoza understood by substance that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, and concluded that there can be only one substance of its kind. Leibnitz accepted Spinoza's principle and pointed out that this did not rule out the possibility of an infinite number of substances, each self-contained, windowless and unique. The liberation of experience from the compulsion of knowledge and practice makes it unique, unrelated and a totality, in other words, a monad. Poetry which expresses such experience is therefore self-contained, windowless and unique. Two substances having different

attributes have nothing in common between them and hence there can be nothing in common between two poems. The world of art is a world of monads.

The monadic experience which constitutes the content of poetry is a totality and therefore complex. That which is absolutely simple is absolutely unknown, for diversity is a necessary condition of knowledge. In the case of poetic experience, this diversity is intensified. The suspension of conative and cognitive responses enhances the clearness of the perception as well as the purity and freedom of the accompanying emotions. We notice many elements which in real life cannot struggle into our consciousness, for, as Roger Fry points out, almost all the things which are useful in any way put on more or less a cap of invisibility which hides all characters except those immediately useful. Similarly, the emotions accompanying these perceptions are realised more clearly in the experience of art. The need of responsive action does not divert our attention from the enjoyment of the feeling. Hence pure vision abstracted from necessity and pure feeling divorced from resultant action make such experiences more complex and diversified than the experiences of normal life. In spite of

greater diversity and complexity, the elements in poetic experience constitute an organic whole of which the number of parts do not confuse and hide the unity. To see an experience as a whole and to see it as unique are therefore merely different ways of expressing the same fact. Any event or experience is so rich in integrated elements and relations that its duplication is almost inconceivable. It therefore follows that seeing anything whole is seeing it unique.

An experience is therefore seized on, isolated out of the flux of things and contemplated for its own sake. Because it is related neither to what has gone before nor to what will follow, it is a unique and self-contained totality. The unity of such experience is therefore not derivative but originates from within. Hence the complex elements which constitute it must exhibit perfect inter-relationship. When experience reveals such perfect inter-relationship of the elements, we call it significant. Poetry by freeing experience from the practical and the cognitive attitudes makes experience significant. This it does by seeing it as a unique and unrelated totality. The function of the poet may therefore be defined as revealing the unique individuality of things. The scientific desire to understand

makes indifferent universalisation of objects the aim of science. The poetic impulse to enjoy acquaintance results in their unique individualisation as objects of art.

The realisation of the uniqueness of experience is accompanied not only by a purer, but also by a heightened emotional charge. Familiarity dulls the edge of pleasure. The economy of life teaches us to see only so much as is necessary for recognising or identifying a familiar object and ignores its other aspects. Hence the responses evoked are only those suitable for the occasion: the rest of our nature remains dormant. But the incursion of an unfamiliar object disturbs the set patterns of behaviour and forces the whole organism to react. Because there is no predetermined mode of response, all the powers of the organism are roused to activity. The result is a quickening of all the faculties, cognitive, emotional and conative. This helps to explain why a child is in a state of continuous excitement. To the child, every moment brings with it its novelty. Life is a continual adventure and his heightened consciousness is a symptom of his love for it.

Poetry is indeed in a way like love. There may be, and in fact are, thousands and millions

of women in the world but at the moment of ecstatic love, it is "the unique she" who alone exists for the lover. The delight of this knowledge of her uniqueness is inseparably tied up with the fervour and emotional excitement of his being. If the lover is told that it is an illusion, he simply laughs at the remark. Nothing can prove to him the falsity of what he so directly apprehends. And if he is indeed deluded, is not his dream better than the awakening?

The poet's function then is to see the uniqueness of things and give them a permanent form. The unceasing march of things and events threatens to hurry them into one process of undifferentiated and indefinite fragments. Cognitive and practical life must regard them so. They can serve their function in our vital economy only as elements in a unified system. It is only at rare moments that it is given even to a poet to see objects as unique and individual. Poetry therefore represents his attempt to crystalise in a permanent form and shape the content of a fleeting vision, but that which it embodies and must embody is individual and unique. To call a thing commonplace or as of a class, is its utter artistic damnation.

The function of the poet is therefore to see

and embody the individual in objects of experience. Through his creations, he brings them before the consciousness of others less blessed with this—what may be called second sight—but how a few hints and notes jotted in words, colour, marble or sound evoke in himself and others this sense of a world of individual wholes is another and an equally fascinating story.

·POETRY· MONADS AND SOCIETY

Poetry Monads and Society

The conception of poetry as monadic helps to explain some of its most puzzling characteristics. Aristotle pointed out how terror, anxiety and grief are enjoyed in tragedy. Emotions which in actuality are carefully avoided are deliberately sought out in poetry. Experiences which in real life weigh us down with care and sap our vitality contribute to our aesthetic enjoyment. Even the ugly and the unpleasant have their place in art. Neither the hedonistic nor the utilitarian theory offers any satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon, but the moment we look on art as monadic, the puzzle disappears. Terror, anxiety and grief are the feelings which accompany experiences inimical to life, and serve as danger signals that warn the organism. Consequently, such feelings are hardly ever attended to for their own sake. They have served their function successfully as soon as they have switched on the energy of the organism to escape or overcome the danger. If, therefore,

such experiences could be divested of their threat to life, the accompanying feelings would lose their character as mere danger signals intended to call out the appropriate motor responses. It is common knowledge that obstacles and dangers call out our best efforts. If the danger is real, the efforts are spent in meeting it. Where the danger is not real, the only result is a heightened consciousness. The feelings are attended to for their own sake and constitute an aesthetic enjoyment of the experience.

By cutting an experience loose from its antecedents and consequences, poetry makes it possible to enjoy it aesthetically. Truth and falsity are the province of logic, the useful and the unutile that of ethics. Both logic and ethics contain a reference beyond themselves and presuppose a system of relations against which their data are tested. None of the data can escape conformity to the system. Those accepted by the system are recognised as valid. A datum which is not immediately accepted cannot yet be altogether rejected, but must be shifted from one region of the system to another till it finally finds its proper place. Poetry which is concerned with experiences in monadic isolation has therefore no concern with truth or falsity.

Nor does it distinguish between the harmful and the beneficent. Like the monad, it is unrelated, windowless and unique.

The monadic character of poetry also explains its freedom and fluidity. They are in truth different aspects of the same fact. The iron chain of necessity governs all our experiences. Practice and knowledge must both suffer its domination. Poetry, by its unconcern with the values of truth and use, breaks away from the causal chain. The only necessity it recognises is its own inner necessity, the expression of its unity as a monad. By detaching an experience from its roots in reality, poetry overcomes the compulsion of the objective. As we have already seen, neither blind impulse nor deliberate action is free. The one expresses an instinctive drive and the other is the result of conscious thought, but they are at one in serving as the means of adaptation between the ego and the environment. Both are therefore determined and unfree. Art is on the contrary autonomous, for its content is a self-contained unit uninfluenced by any external factor. The significance of art is therefore intrinsic, not derivative.

The disinterestedness of art is a necessary

corollary to its monadic character. The essence of the aesthetic experience is its liberation from the demands of the useful and the true. The moment a purpose is smuggled in from outside, art becomes subject to all the laws which govern the elements of our ordinary experience. Practical considerations come in and standards are introduced which judge art by its effect on conduct. We have already seen the disastrous consequences of such theories. Disinterestedness of art is a necessary concomitant of its autonomy. Both are based on its isolation from the stream of purposive activity, in a word on its monadic character.

There is, however, a puzzle about the disinterestedness of art. In one sense, cognition also is disinterested. To ordinary as well as scientific experience, an object appears as characterised by attributes and relations that seem to belong to it. If we are to be aware of it, we must be aware of it as so characterised. The result is a uniformity and generality in experience which ignores and overcomes the idiosyncrasies of the individual. Science and commonsense have therefore their own disinterestedness: their indifference to the hopes and claims of particular persons. What is true

here-now and for me must be true everywhere and always and for every man. The disinterestedness of science is thus the expression of its objectivity and universality.

The disinterestedness of art does not, however, demand this type of universality or uniformity. A statement in one poem does not in any way commit the poet or the reader to accept it anywhere else. Because knowledge and practice function in one common world, they are subject to the laws of identity and contradiction. A storm in Ceylon may have disastrous consequences on the emotional life of a debuntante in England. If Helen's nose had been a fraction of an inch shorter or longer, the whole course of European history might have been different. In the world of common reality, things are tied to one another by iron chains and nothing is indifferent to anything else. In poetry, the chain snaps. We can make statements or have experiences which are totally incompatible with one another. No body can take a poet to task if in one poem he compares his love to a red rose, in a second to a violet and in a third to a solitary star in the evening sky. The only conformity he has to observe is within the poem itself. And here also the conformity

is not logical but emotional. It in no way derogates from its merits if in the same poem the poet compares his love to a violet and the evening star. Just as there is no conflict between two universes of discourse, there is no conflict between the different metaphors in a poem and still less between those in two different poems. Elements within the same system can clash. There can be no clash whatever between two systems that have nothing in common between them.

Eliot has noticed that "the impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality." From this he has concluded that the poet has no personality to express, but only a particular medium in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. We need not attack, as Eliot does, the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul to explain this phenomenon. Nor is it necessary to argue with Stephen Spender that an escape from personality, which is an escape from emotions, *is* an expression of personality. All that is necessary is that the phenomenon noticed

by Eliot should be explained. This can be easily done if only we remember what has been said of the disinterestedness of art. Impressions and experiences which are important in the life history of the man derive their importance from the influence they exert upon the course of his life. The greater their importance in his life history, the more intimately are they linked with other impressions or experiences of his life. Hence in their case, the practical aspect becomes dominant and they can be hardly enjoyed for their own sakes. This also explains why experiences do not immediately become the object of expression in art and indicates the element of truth contained in Wordsworth's definition of poetry as emotion recollected in tranquillity. Memory, which is a function of time, acts as a mirror that isolates an experience from its immediate surroundings and makes artistic contemplation possible. At the moment of experience, the immediate necessary responses exhaust the energy and attention of the individual. It is only when the experience is detached from the context of practical consequences that we can attend to it for its own sake. A bereaved father at the moment of his bereavement may by his words and action betray his

grief. It is not humanly possible for him to express it in a work of art by objectively presenting it to the mind through an act of the creative imagination.

The monadic character of poetry thus explains not only why it is disinterested, but also why it is concrete. The poem expresses an experience that has been detached from the currents of life's history. It is related neither by way of interest and purpose nor by way of results and antecedents with other elements of experience. Even the emotions in it are distilled. In normal life, emotions generate the energy required to evoke the proper responses for the fulfilment of the ends of the organism. In art, emotion is detached from its normal objectives and serves to intensify the experience which art expresses. In actuality, emotions therefore have a history and cannot be switched off from one object to another without a convulsion. Perhaps much of the tragedy of life is due to this fact. In art, the emotions are themselves isolated and unrelated. They can be played upon in turn and their objects changed without any detriment to the organism. The poet can express in one poem utter dejection and desolation of the spirit. In another, he can sing of victory

and jubilation. The same actor can play the part of a saint to-day and that of a villain the day after. There is a story that a Bengal humanitarian once threw his shoes at the man who was acting the part of a villain in a play. His response may have been deeply moral, but it certainly was not an aesthetic response.

The concreteness also accounts for the element of novelty that we demand from a work of art. When we call a poem concrete, we mean that it expresses a particular experience of a particular poet in a particular mood at a particular time. Further, this experience is considered for and by itself, and unrelated to any of his other experiences. Considered as a totality, it exhibits an infinity of interrelations within itself which permit neither reference nor repetition. The concreteness of poetry is thus a function of its uniqueness. Because it is unique, it can have no duplicate. Hence every poem is a monad, an entirely novel unit of reality even though it might contain elements that it shares in common with other poems. Leibnitz showed that there cannot be two monads that are exactly alike. In the world of art, one work can be an exact image of another only at the cost of losing its aesthetic authenticity.

The self-centredness of poets and their partial indifference to an audience have often attracted notice. Conflicting explanations have been offered for this fact, some plausible, some not. It has sometimes been suggested that because the poet is concerned with forms of beauty and grace in his imaginative life, he shows by contrast in his practical life a curious lack of them. By a law of psychological compensation, the poet's glorification of virtue in the world of art is offset by his utter indifference to moral values in the everyday world. His relative indifference to an audience is sought to be explained in a similar way. It is also suggested that the motive or the fact of communication plays no part at all in poetry. Poetry is concerned only with the expression of feeling and is not interested as to whether such feelings are communicated or not. There have even been critics who have gone so far as to say that a poet publishes his poems only in order to give them an impersonal identity.

The obvious criticism against such explanations is that they fail to account adequately for the facts. It is true that all poets are characterised by egocentricity, for the poet records either directly or indirectly all his

impressions, experiences, thoughts and images. It is, however, simply not true to say that all poets are selfish or indifferent to moral values. There have been poets like Milton who tried to live according to the ideals they preached. There have been poets who have expressed all the moral aspects of life and yet left us in doubt about their own attitude on moral questions. Shelley was in many senses an intensely moral person, Shakespeare perhaps not. It is therefore absurd to attempt to classify all poets together as either moral or immoral or amoral. The same thing applies to their supposed egotism. It is more correct to speak of the egocentricity than the egotism of the poet. Egotism suggests an admixture of practical considerations, while the essence of the poetic activity is the detachment from a cognitive or practical attitude. The egocentricity of poets must therefore be explained on some theory other than that of compensation. Similarly, the attempt to explain the relative indifference of a poet to an audience by denying communication to be an element in the motive of the poet only explains away the problem. If communication were not an element in the motive of the poet, why should he bother to publish his work at all? To know an experience

is to express it internally. If that is all the artist wants, he need do no more than recognise his own experience. As for impersonal identity, the poet could give his work an impersonal identity by carving it on a piece of stone and dropping it into a well. But the poet does nothing of the kind. He is not content till he has made his experience communicable and he is an artist precisely because he does this.

The conception of poetry as monadic offers a satisfactory solution of both these phenomena. Because the experience poetry expresses is unique, the whole of the poet's attention is concentrated upon it. Because the experience is his own, this concentration of attention must necessarily have an egocentric appearance. The heightened individuality of the poet is therefore merely an expression of the fact that his poetry is seeking to express an experience that is unique, unrelated and a totality: an experience which at the moment of experiencing it exhausts his whole universe. There is nothing in his world but the experience he seeks to express. This is the feature we seek to indicate by referring to egocentricity in practical life. There is, however, a difference. In practical life, egocentricity is contrasted against the non-ego which

forms its circumference. In the case of poetry, the distinction between them is blurred, if not altogether overcome. In the words of Shelley, poetry is "the centre and circumference of knowledge". This, however, is an ideal rather than an achievement of the poet. If the ideal were actually achieved, perhaps it would mean the end of communication, and therefore of poetry itself.

The indifference to an audience is a necessary corollary. Since at the moment of poetic experience nothing else exists for the poet, his whole being is absorbed in the experience and its expression. Hence he cannot but be relatively indifferent to the audience, even though the very fact of expression indicates that an audience is implied. The implying of an audience and the ignoring of it have led some critics to identify the activity of art with the play of children. We have already noticed the very striking similarities between art and such play. Nevertheless, there is one important difference which cannot be overlooked. In the case of the child, the whole content of the infant's consciousness is projected into reality. He does not distinguish between things and persons, whether himself or others. There is an almost complete absence of the

consciousness of self. In the case of the poet, as we have just seen, the egocentricity never becomes so absolute as to cease to be egocentric. Absolute egocentricity is a limit towards which art strives but cannot reach. For a child, the audience is there simply as a stimulus. His words and action have no social function whatever. In the case of the poet, the indifference to audience is never so complete. The element of communication is never wholly abandoned. The child regards himself as literally the centre of the universe while the poet—because he is an adult and an adult thinks socially even when alone—must distinguish within himself an imaginary listener when he has no other audience. He must express and communicate his feelings to himself, if not to any body else. It is precisely because he must do something more than merely have an experience that he is an artist. In fact, he does not begin to be an artist until he begins to publish his experience.

II

The distinction between play and art must, however, be further considered. Emphasis on it raises two problems which the monadic theory must solve or be itself discarded. If an element of communication is intrinsic to the nature of art, how can we regard the experience it seeks to express as unique, unrelated and a totality? The moment there is a suggestion of communication, the isolation of the experience has broken down. If the experience is not an isolated atom, but an element in the life history of the poet, it can neither be unique nor a totality. Once relations enter into the texture of an experience, how are we to set any limit to their influence? Emphasis upon communication, it is argued, is a denial of the monadic character of art, and in the end destroys even its disinterestedness.

The element of communication distinguishes poetry from play in another way as well. Since the play of the child is wholly indifferent to the motive of communication, such play can be (and often actually is) not only detached from the environment but also lacking in any but the most

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tenuous of internal unity. Not only is such play detached from the surroundings, but its parts also are detached or at least detachable from one another. Thus in children's play, the scenes and action shift with bewildering rapidity. An ordinary stick is one moment a sword, the next moment a steed and immediately after a dragon. Every moment of the play is an imagination complete in itself and unrelated to the rest. Art shares in this fluidity and freedom of play, but with a difference. The world may no doubt be a fairy land in one story and an inferno in another. Helen may be seized by Paris in one epic. In another, she may elude his grasp and live to an honourable old age. But within the same work of art, the two alternatives cannot both be realised. Identification of art with play has therefore led to the denial of poetic character to any but the shortest of lyrics. We have already seen that poets like Coleridge or Poe held that a long poem is an impossibility. What passes as a long poem is in fact a series of short poems connected together by passages and links that are essentially unpoetic. Is not therefore the acceptance of an epic or a drama as poetry a tacit denial of the monadic theory of art?

The cleavage between the monadic character

of poetry and its communicativeness must therefore be resolved. This can be done only in one of two ways. If it can be shown that the cleavage is not absolute and can be overcome, the paradox disappears. One may also resolve the paradox by denying one of the two incompatibles. But this would be a desperate measure and need not be attempted till the first alternative has irretrievably failed.

We have seen that the experience which poetry seeks to express is detached from the processes and purposes of life. Isolated and unique, it is enjoyed for its own sake and represents a totality in which the different elements have value only as elements of that particular whole. We have also seen that this freedom from cognitive and practical demands gives to such experience a complexity and richness which the normal experiences of every day lack. All these emphasise the monadic character of such experiences. Like monads, they are characterised by complete external freedom and great internal complexity. But the moment we concentrate on the elements that constitute the internal complexity, a new feature reveals itself. These elements in poetry are not themselves monadic, as the elements in children's play can

be and often are. They are the results of the life history of the poet, which makes them the particular impressions of a particular poet in a particular mood at a particular time. Eliot has referred to this factor in discussing the place of tradition in poetry and held that it involves "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order." To put it in other words, poetry contemplates the experience of the individual detached from the currents of cognitive and practical necessity. But the individual himself is the resultant of social forces which make him what he is. Poetry is the embodiment of the unique experience of a social ego.

The analogy of poetry with monads is illuminating for more reasons than one. Leibnitz conceived of the monads as units of reality, substantival and independent in character. They are windowless and unrelated, for relatedness would contradict the independence of their

being. At the same time, they are infinite in number and are distinguished from one another by the degree of their activity. Hence a scale of activity determines their place and function in reality, though not from the point of view of their existence. "Every monad must be different from every other. For there are never in nature two beings which are precisely alike and in which it is not possible to find some difference which is internal or based on some intrinsic quality." Further, the activity of the monads consists solely in mirroring the universe. The perception of the monad is representation, in the simple, of the compound. Hence each monad is unique, unrelated and independent in its existence, but the elements which constitute its nature are the ideal reflection of the complex and multitudinous universe which they together constitute in turn.

This is exactly what happens in poetry as well. The experience is detached from the flow of time and change, and crystallised in its isolated uniqueness. But the elements which constitute that experience are themselves the results of a long process and show the impress of the life history of the poet. If this were not so, one such experience would not be distinguishable from

another of its kind. All poems would contain and express the same fact of uniqueness of experience. One poem would have nothing to differentiate it from another. Indeed, there would be no way of even distinguishing the work of one poet from that of another. It may be that experiences which are unimportant in life become important in the poetry and those that are important in life have no place in the poetry. We have already seen why this is so, but the point to note is that only real experiences, whether important or unimportant, can become the raw materials of poetry. To quote Eliot again, "It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all." In a word, it is the social ego which is active and eloquent even in the most personal of lyrics. The poem can deny the social ego only by ceasing to be a poem.

Each poem is therefore characterised by an internal diversity that distinguishes it from all other poems. This diversity is the resultant of two factors: the elements which constitute it and the structure or pattern exhibited by the elements

in combination. Isolated from the currents of practical life, each factor is experienced as a totality. The purity of abstract vision reveals in them ingredients unsuspected by the normal consciousness. The ingredients and the structure may, as abstractions, be the common contents of our experience. As the concrete experiences of a particular individual, they lose their general currency and acquire instead an individual value of their own. It is here that the personal history of the poet acquires importance. No two individuals have or can have exactly the same past, and the same ingredients of experience may connote in the lives of two individuals entirely different emotional values. Hence the uniqueness of the poetic experience, for exactly *those* ingredients in exactly *that* combination can perhaps never be repeated again.

The monadic character of poetry is therefore a function of its social origin. It is society which is responsible for the differentiation of individuals. The more complex the social matrix, the greater are the possibilities of individual variation. In animal life, the responses of the organism to a stimulus can be foretold with a degree of accuracy that we can

never achieve in a member of even the most primitive society. Yet primitive man shows a certain uniformity in his attitudes and actions. As MacIver puts it, "The whole life of primitive peoples is custom-ridden. There is a right way of doing everything and only one right way. The primal facts of birth, marriage and death are given an elaborate social setting. Natural phenomena are translated into social institutions by the ritual attached to their occurrence. Such observances are guarded by rigorous sanction and the dreadful powers of a misknown universe jealously attend their violation. . . It is obvious that under all such systems individual incentive is closely circumscribed. Men are as it were nearer to the common mould of the race. They walk in pre-determined ways, expressive of their own conformity to type. The individual is not self-directed in any of the important concerns of his life. He has neither the capacity nor the social sanction for liberty. He follows the narrow trail beaten by thousands of feet and dares not explore the perils of diversity. He remains always the ward of his society." Where custom is the king of men, experiences of men also tend to become stereotyped and uniform. It is only the growth of civilization that breaks

up the homogeneity of the primitive community by the increase in the complexity of organisation, in the inequality of opportunity and the vast specialisation of knowledge as well as function. It is no exaggeration to say that the more complex our social world, the more the individual ingredients of experience become an inter-section of a number of concepts and relations. If this is true of every single ingredient in experience, it is all the truer in the case of the experience as a totality, i.e., as a poetic experience. The fact of communication is therefore not incompatible with the monadic character of poetry. Communication is essentially social and is in fact one of the basic conditions for its origin and existence. No society could exist for a moment without the possibility of communication between its members, for society is nothing but the visible symbol of the fact that communication has taken place. In a word, if the monadic character of poetry is a function of its social origin, society itself is a function of the fact of communication between its members.

The attempt to deny the character of poetry to an epic or drama, in fact to any but the shortest of lyrics, is therefore based on a misunderstanding of the monadic character of

poetry. Such denial assumes that poetry, because it is monadic, cannot have internal complexity, and hence must be the lyric expression of a simple feeling or sensation. We have already seen that a simple feeling or sensation—so simple that it admits of no internal variety—is a mere logical abstraction and can never be a fact of experience. Further, our consideration of the nature of monads has shown that to think of the monad as absolutely simple is really to misunderstand its nature. A monad, in order to be distinguishable from other monads, must be characterised by diversity in the ingredients as well as in the structure of the ingredients. Hence the conception of poetry as monadic does not entail any assumption about its simplicity or scope. Besides, if the monadic character of poetry really demanded simplicity, where should we draw the line? What is the precise length which a poem must not exceed in order to remain a poem? Every feeling and experience is a complex unit of many elements and the elements themselves are in many cases further analysable into simpler ingredients. This is a process that is endless. We never reach in experience to simple atoms that are further unanalysable. Even the monad of Leibnitz has

its perceptions in which it mirrors the universe. The essence of poetic experience lies in its detachment from the urgencies of practical life. It is immaterial whether the experience contains only a few items of reality or many, so long as the process of detachment has really taken place. In fact one may, on the contrary, say that a great poem must be a long poem, because only a long poem can express the infinite inter-relations of the innumerable elements which constitute every isolated moment of our experience.

The real motive for denying poetic character to a long poem is not to be found in its monadic isolation. The monadic character refers, as we have just seen, to its function in the economy of life, not to its internal elements and structure. Nevertheless, a mistaken conception of the character of monads helped in strengthening an illusion created by a misunderstanding about the nature and function of communication in poetry. Poetry must, at the risk of otherwise losing its character, communicate. One may even go so far as to say that no communication, no poetry. For poetry must on any theory express an experience and the expression of an experience without communicating it is a logical impossibility.

Every case of self-expression is simultaneously a case of self-communication. This involves a distinction within the self, between the self that communicates and the self to which it is communicated. Therefore, an audience—at least in principle if not also in fact—is a necessary condition of self-expression. In self-expression, social ingredients must be used. These social ingredients are in fact used to express the experience for a self which is social in origin and character. It is no exaggeration to say that self-expression is really self-socialisation.

Once it is realised that self-expression is in fact self-socialisation, the difficulty about the long poem disappears. Doubts arise about the long poem on account of two mistakes. One is the uncritical belief that communication and expression are not merely distinct but also different. The other is the belief that the essence of poetry is expression, and communication, if it takes place at all, is an unintended by-product. Both the beliefs, we have already seen, are unfounded. Nevertheless, it is easy to understand why these mistakes should occur. The second mistake is in fact based on the first. Once it is admitted that expression is the essence of poetry, the existence of such poetry would prove the

possibility of expression without communication. Recent developments in poetic technique have, as already indicated, encouraged this belief in poetry as pure expression. Consideration of these would take us too far from our immediate purposes. It is enough to point out that the belief arises out of a mistake about the function of the intellect in poetry. The characteristic expression of the intellect is thought. Such thought is, by its very nature, general. For thought is something fixed and comprehensible, something which is the same or approximately the same for all. Thought immediately brings with it questions of belief and attitude. The conflict of beliefs in modern life has therefore led many poets to attempt to cut their poetry loose from beliefs. The result has been an emphasis upon the lyric quality of experience. The main instrument of communication between human individuals today is thought. Language is a medium of communication only so far as it is a vehicle of thought. Without the structure of thought, language degenerates into mere sound and ceases to be language. Hence, the isolation of experiences and impressions from beliefs (and hence from thought) has necessarily diminished the possibility as well as the value of

communication in poetry. The inevitable corollary has been the denial of poetic character to long poems. It is difficult enough to effect movement and transition within a poem even when it is buttressed up by a movement of thought. It is almost impossible to effect such movement or transition when the poem is void of intellectual content.

It is true that in poetry there is something more than mere communication of the intelligible. It is also true that communication sometimes takes place without the direct intervention of thought. These true statements must not, however, be twisted to mean that the communication of the intelligible need not enter into poetry at all. Even when communication occurs without the direct intervention of thought, all reference of thought is not absent. Where communication is through feeling alone, it can never be completely satisfactory, for it would involve the recreation of something that is necessarily unique. We are asking another to realise in his own experience something that belongs to ours. This can never be complete, for the experience of two men can never tally in every respect. The result is that the writer can never be sure of establishing any dependable relations with his

readers. Lacking in logical unity, he comes to be dependent entirely on the psychological unity of his impressions and experiences, and is unable to distinguish between purely personal associations and those which are recognisable by the common reader. As Sparrow has well put it, "By foregoing the intellectual faculties a writer renounces the possibility of communicating thought and also the possibility of communicating feeling through the understanding, of raising emotions as has been the universal practice of writers in the past by means of the implications and associations of what is meant." The inevitable result is that the merely suggestive poem is either limited to the record of a single sense impression or emotional mood, or else it presents the appearance of a mere conglomeration of images and ideas. In practice, however, few poets cling to the ideal of suggestion to the exclusion of every thing else. Such symbolist poems as are not restricted to a very short compass introduce intelligible relations between the ideas that they successfully evoke and where they fail to do this, they fall to pieces and are not recognisable as unities at all.

The monadism of poetry is therefore not incompatible with the possibility of either

a long poem or of communication. On the contrary, the more we look into the nature of monads, the more clearly are the mysteries of poetic creation revealed. Leibnitz conceived the monads as units of the universe, self-contained, unique and windowless and yet mirroring the universe from their own points of view. The guarantee of correspondence between the activities of the different monads was the law of pre-established harmony. This law is not, however, something external to the monads and imposed upon them from above. It is merely the expression of their common nature and common functioning. Hence, whatever a monad perceives within its own windowless universe is perceived by all the other monads in their own windowless universes. The monads do not, however, influence one another causally. Causal connection would destroy their independence and reduce them to elements within the same system. Judged by the value of their respective contributions to the totality, monads would lose their autonomy and cease to be monads.

It is exactly the same with poetry. It detaches experience from the iron system that governs our life and expresses its distilled essence. This detachment accounts for the freedom and

fluidity of the poem. The fact that the experience, both in its ingredients and its structure, is social in origin explains why it can be communicated to others and does not remain the private possession of the poet. The universality of the appeal of poetry is to be found in the fact of its social origin. Self-expression, as we have already seen, is self-socialisation.

It is at this stage that we might try to account for a fact which has puzzled poets and critics in all ages. If poetry is the unique individualisation of an experience detached from the flow of causality, why is it that the attempt to achieve this individualisation so often fails? We have already seen that the sincerity of the poet has little bearing on the question. Experiences in the raw are genuinely felt and do not yet constitute the best materials of poetry. Nor is it possible to say that it is all a matter of technique. We cannot say that the poet who has the technique succeeds in expressing the experience and evoking the proper responses while a poet of lesser skill fails, perhaps in spite of greater sincerity. The concentration of experience which happens in a successful poem does not seem to happen consciously or of deliberation. Otherwise, how to explain the many bad poems that

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every great poet has written, and the occasional triumphs of art that illuminate the dreary wastes of the work of a mediocrity?

Neither sincerity nor skill can therefore guarantee poetic communication. This statement must not, however, be simply converted. It would be an obvious error to say that for achieving communication, sincerity or skill are unnecessary. All that is meant is that though skill and sincerity are necessary ingredients in poetry, they do not by themselves constitute a poem. Something more is necessary. Some have sought this further element in the experience of the poet. The wider the range of the poet's experiences and the more deeply they have been felt, the more likely it is that he will succeed as a poet. What has been said earlier about the quantity of reality in poetry seems to support this contention. In the end, we yet have to confess that wealth of experience may increase the likelihood of poetic success, but does little more. Experience can, no more than skill or sincerity, guarantee poetic achievement.

It has on the contrary also been suggested that experience has little to do with poetry. Is it not common knowledge that poets have often done their best work in their youth? In fact,

from the point of view of need of experience, the arts seem to exhibit a clear hierarchy. In music, the need for experience seems almost nil, and the infant prodigy is a common phenomenon. In poetry also, some of the finest lyrics of the world have been written by adolescents or youths before they have reached their prime. The full development of the novel, on the other hand, demands even in genius the maturity of concrete experience. Thus poetry has never as yet shown an infant prodigy nor fiction an adolescent master-novelist. The order of time in the life of the artist finds a curious reflection in the temporal character of the work of art. In music, there is no time reference at all and its contents are timeless in the fullest sense of the term. In poetry also, the temporal elements, if they occur at all, are unimportant, while the sequence of time is one of the most important elements in a novel. The importance of time in the content seems to exhibit a direct ratio to the scale of time in the life of the artist. Christopher Caudwell, whose premature death is a tragedy for English aesthetics, has correlated the temporal scale of the arts with that of the sciences and offered an interesting explanation of the variations by examining the relation of

the arts and the sciences to the instincts of man.

If neither skill nor sincerity nor experience can explain the achievement of poetry, is there any wonder that poetry should be regarded as a divine madness, an incursion of supernatural influences that obey no human law? In discussing the views of Plato, we have seen the futility of such a theory. It is nothing more than a tacit admission of the unintelligibility of poetry. Before accepting this unintelligibility as final, it is desirable to enquire whether the conception of poetry as monadic does not offer an explanation of this undoubted puzzle.

We have suggested that communication is the basis of society and the monadic character of poetry a function of its social origin. Communication is therefore intrinsic to the nature of poetry, though the communication may adopt alternative modes. We have further seen that the experience communicated is constituted by social ingredients organized into patterns whose texture also bears evidence of its social origin. That is why an element of intelligible structure must persist in every poetic work. So long as language does not change into mere sound, the connection of meaning cannot be entirely broken.

Poetry can finally abandon meaning only by merging into music. Music also has its own laws of communication through emotional congruence. So far as it communicates, an element of meaning re-enters the world of music. Perhaps it is impossible to abandon meaning without abandoning the world of human fellowship.

A poem is successful when the organisation of these social ingredients achieves a pattern that corresponds to the experiences of other men. Since the experience of each man is unique, these social ingredients are charged with different associative and emotional potency in different men. The patterns are themselves a function of the social heritage and change with variations in the social experience of the individual. But behind and underneath all these changes are certain fundamental instincts which remain the same in spite of the over-growth of different habits and beliefs of civilization. Our cognitive life expresses the social aspects of individual experience and emphasises the meaning and significance common to such experiences. The aesthetic attitude attempts to ignore the meaning of the experience and contemplates it for its own sake. When such contemplation penetrates beyond the encrustation of social thought and reaches

back to the fundamental unchanging instincts, we have a successful poem.

The threat to successful poetry is therefore two-fold. On the one hand, emphasis upon the elements of thought brings into prominence the conscious uniformities in the experiences of the individuals of a social group. The cognitive and practical attitudes immediately supervene and the result is an evaluation of the poem by pragmatic standards. These standards change with changing social conditions. Hence they have an appeal only for those who accept the same social ideals. For persons with other types of social standards, or even for persons of the same social group at some different time, they have no appeal. Patriotic poems or religious hymns generally appeal only to those who accept the patriotic or religious belief for some other reasons. It is not accidental that didactic poems almost invariably fail.

In the organisation of the elements of experience, emphasis may also be laid on those elements only which are peculiar to the poet. Failure is then equally inevitable. Here private association takes the place of common social patterns. The abandonment of meaning and consequent loss of intellectual structure suppresses the

element of generality in such experience. The poet is thrown back upon himself and the scenery of his semi-conscious mind. A phantasmagoria of images and inchoate passages of reflection march through his consciousness. Because these are private to himself, they bear the stamp of their origin in his personal life. In other words, their connection with the experiences and impressions of his life is not fully overcome. They are not liberated from the iron chain of causality and whether we will or not, provoke the pragmatic judgments which it is the aim of poetry to evade. They become personal, a mere record of the psychological happenings in the mind of the poet. In attempting to express, they in fact betray personality. It is not accidental that symbolist and surrealist poetry so quickly date.

Successful poetry must avoid both these dangers. It must not emphasise the element of thought and belief in the experience of the poet. Our experience can never be completely unmeaningful but in poetry this meaning cannot be the meaning *of* the experience. Meaning carries in it a reference beyond itself and hence to emphasise the meaning of an experience would be to deny its detachment and isolation. Emphasis on its relations to other experiences

would also destroy its disinterestedness and disqualify it for expression in art. Hence it must be the meaning *in* the experience, the interrelation of the ingredients which constitute it a self-contained totality. Nor can poetry exaggerate the subjective and personal aspects of the poetic experience. This would lead to a betrayal of emotion, not its expression. The intrusion of personal elements would make the poet unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Poetry can transcend the limitations of subjective origin and yet achieve a universality—which, however, is not the universality of thought —by expressing universal schematic forms of experience which are the common property of all human beings. These schemata are a kind of poetic formula which each individual can interpret according to his own lights and his own experience.

III

These universal schematic forms of experience are based on the fundamental instincts of man. The infinite complexity of life forces these instincts to express themselves in infinitely various ways. Behind all the variety of expression lies a recognisable identity of structure among these instinctive drives. Poetry—by detaching an experience from all the concomitants that bind it to its antecedents and consequences—makes it possible to touch the secret roots of the fundamental instincts of man. This explains why the subject-matter of poetry never changes nor grows stale. The fact that poetry is rooted in instincts that are unchanging also helps us to understand a feature in it which has often attracted notice: the subject-matter of great poetry is always commonplace and trite. It is commonplace because it is the expression of a universal urge, something which every one has experienced in his own way. The only thing that the poet has done is to liberate it from the casualness of personal experience and the narrowness of conceptual interpretation. One illustration from Shakespeare

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may suffice. We forget the new elements of reality and the wide range of affective colouring in which he soaks the elements he brings into the ambit of poetry. The lines which cling to our memory are trite observations like "Ripeness is all".

This would help to explain why the world's greatest poetry has been written round love and terror. Sex and self-preservation are fundamental instincts of man, and further, are instincts that can be detached from their immediate objectives. Because they are fundamental, they evoke our deepest responses.. The poet needs only to touch the fringe of these instincts, and immediately all the pent-up charge of our emotional energy is released. Because they are capable of detachment and isolation, the energy—instead of exhausting itself in the pursuit of practical ends—returns upon itself and allows aesthetic enjoyment of the emotion.

This is a characteristic art shares with sublimation. We have seen that they are related but distinct. The chief distinction between them lies in the different types of alteration which their emotional charges undergo. An element of distortion and casualness characterises sublimation. In art the instincts are held in distilled purity.

Detachment and diversion of instincts from their natural objects are both necessary conditions of social life. Hence both sublimation and art must enter into the texture of consciousness of even the commonest of men. There is no human being who does not sublimate some of his instincts. There is no human being who does not express some of them in art. Because sex and self-preservation are instincts common to all men, the greatest subjects of art must deal with them. The instinctual basis of art explains why great art is trite and commonplace. But all instincts cannot serve as the basis of art. They must be instincts capable of sublimation or aesthetic expression. Hunger is perhaps even more fundamental than sex, but that is precisely the reason why it has not been and cannot be a subject of great poetry. Hunger can be neither detached nor diverted. It permits neither sublimation nor aesthetic expression. Hunger cannot be isolated from the current of events and enjoyed for its own sake. Within flexible limits, sex or self-preservation can.

The universality of art therefore reaches back to the instinctual make-up of man. We may put the same thing in another way. Every individual is changing during every moment of

his life. In a sense, each of these moments is an epitome of his whole life. His past and future both converge in the experience of the moment, and not only his personal past and future but the past and the future of the whole race. For he is what he is at any moment as a result of biological and social processes that carry us far beyond the limits of his personal, family or even tribal history. The poet attempts to isolate this experience from the stress of urgent demands and see it in its unique totality. The poem is a monad which reflects the entire universe from a unique point of view. But the changes are not confined to the individual alone. Society, which is composed of the individuals, must change along with changes in the individuals. In fact, society changes in two dimensions while the individual changes in only one. Social change includes all the changes which its ingredients, the individuals, undergo. In addition, it reflects the structural changes which alterations in the relationship of the individuals cause. Hence, the monad of poetry must reflect not only the individual universe of the poet, but also the social universe of which he is an ingredient.

It is a condition of poetic achievement that

the two universes must coincide. Coincidence is, however, difficult if not impossible on the plane of conscious thought. Concepts are functions of unity among our representations and arise because of the need to organise our experience from a practical point of view. Even science, though not practical in its immediate objective, is ultimately practical in import. Nor can the coincidence be achieved by emphasising those elements in the poet's universe which are of specific personal import to him. For this would re-introduce the element of conscious and willed personality which belongs to the poet as a practical man, not as an artist. The interests of his private life would be projected into his work, limiting its appeal to those who share kindred interests. Croce has rightly pointed out that the bad artist leaves traces of his personality in the work of art whilst the great artist entirely erases them. The coincidence is achieved only when the poet penetrates beyond the conventions and convictions of his personal life and reaches back to those fundamental instincts and passions which are the unchanging material of human nature in all ages and all climes.

This emphasis upon the primeval instincts explains why the subject-matter of poetry must

always be commonplace and trite. It also throws fresh light on two other puzzles connected with the poetic activity. The first concerns the poet's apparent lack of control over his inspiration. This has led many critics to label the poetic activity as irrational or even as a madness. The second is the continual discovery of novelty in the successful work of art, and the demand for originality which has grown out of it.

Poetry, in order to be successful, must go behind the conventions and convictions of life and touch the basic instincts which in an undifferentiated form are the same in all human beings. These undifferentiated instincts supply universal schematic forms of experience on which poetry depends for its appeal. In the course of social and individual development, the instincts undergo increasing differentiations. Poetry, in its demand to reach back to the universal schematic forms of experience denies, in fact if not in theory, the will and the intellect which are the instruments of these developments. It is therefore not surprising that poetry should exhibit an element which is analogous to the irrational and involuntary aspects of our nature. The concept of inspiration is merely an attempt to exalt this irrationality and involuntariness.

This also explains why, in spite of its emphasis on the absolutely correct word, poetry is characterised by an atmosphere of cloudy and ambiguous emotions. Concepts are definite and determinate. By abandoning concepts, poetry abandons determination and definiteness. Its horizons seem to open and expand and stretch out to dim infinity.

The infinite suggestiveness of poetry is therefore an immediate consequence of its basis in the primal and undifferentiated instincts of man. The poet is able to see the disinterested interplay of these instincts in his imaginative vision of a particular experience of life. Such work generates an emotion that has been detached from whatever is personal or particular in his life. It is therefore able to evoke emotions in men of all conditions and types. The universality of all art and its perennial novelty are thus the two sides of the same fact. Training may no doubt enable us to see new features and relations in a great work of art, but this is only a quantitative complication and does not touch its essential quality of appeal. The best poems of Wordsworth appeal to the young inexperienced child and to the world-weary ancient, to the simple unlettered man and the erudite scholar.

They all re-interpret in terms of their own experience the concentration of impressions and feelings which the poet detached from the currents of his life. But perhaps the supreme example of this indeterminacy in poetry is Shakespeare. In his own generation, he appealed to the Pit and the Stall, and appeals to them even to-day in spite of the changes which the European consciousness has undergone. In fact, his appeal extends beyond the ambits of European civilization. Men with different backgrounds of culture and civilization succumb to his charm. They succumb only because his work has reached beyond the limits of personality and expressed in a kind of poetic formula the unchanging elements of human nature. The monad of his poetry mirrors not merely his personal universe, not merely the social universe of his day but the entire human universe in its unchanging terms, relations and values.

What has been said also explains the demand for novelty which every work of art must satisfy. We have already in another context seen that novelty or originality is equally the demand of science. The concern of art is with experience that is detached from the practical urgencies of life. This experience is characterised not only

by disinterestedness but also by its affiliation with the undifferentiated instincts of man. The experience of the poet is therefore an expression of the universal schematic elements which ensure the possibility of communication between man and man. If the experience is one which has occurred before and been expressed, it has become one among the different social ingredients which enter into the constitution of the individual. To express it again would therefore be merely a repetition and immediately recall by suggestion the other impressions and feelings with which it was associated on the occasion of its last occurrence. This would make it impossible for the poet himself to maintain an attitude of neutralised interest towards it. He would judge it by pragmatic standards derived from his personal life. His reactions would become practical and therefore unpoetic.

Eliot has pointed out that when a new work of art is created, it bears in a more or less clear manner the imprint of all previous works of art. The influence is not, however, one-sided, for all previous works of art are in their turn modified by its incursion. "The existing order is complete before the new work arrives ; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the

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whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered ; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted ; and this is conformity between the old and the new. . . To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all ; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art."

The reasons for this have already been indicated. The poet has an experience which he contemplates in its monadic aspect. In this detached and isolated experience, he feels the presence of the undifferentiated schemata which lie at the basis of all human experience. In expressing it in his poetry, not only is he communicating it to others, he is communicating it to himself as well. What was dimly felt before now becomes a part of his consciousness. This happens without the intervention of concepts which would tie it down to some specific and defined pattern. His consciousness is changed, but simultaneously the consciousness of all human beings who share his experience has also changed. New meanings are revealed in old works and the new work is seen to be full of age-old meaning and significance. It is because of this that poetry is sensitive to new forms of life

long before they have influenced behaviour. Behaviour reacts to stimuli, and must therefore lag behind the immediate processes of life. Poetry, because it is detached from the processes of life, can anticipate the discoveries of cognitive or practical consciousness. It is to this fact that Shelley refers when he says that "poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present."

Conception of poetry as monadic in the sense defined above clearly reveals the functions of rhythm and metaphor. Metre—in its generalised form as rhythm—helps in the isolation of poetic experience from its setting in our life. Wordsworth has pointed out the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition. Here reality, of course, refers to pragmatic reality. Eastman points to the hypnotic effects of metre which lulls us into a controlled slumber in order to make us vividly aware of external impressions which we are not really having at the time. Caudwell has suggested that it tends to produce emotional introversion, a state in which men achieve instinctive

commonness and approach closer to the racial mould which is the basis of the mental make-up of the individual. Wordsworth is pointing to the loosening of the pragmatic bonds which tie our experiences in an iron chain. Eastman emphasises the clarity of vision that results from this aesthetic detachment. Caudwell emphasises the throw-back to instinctive identity which makes poetic communication so deep and far-reaching. Combining all the three aspects, we might say that the function of metre is to help in the imaginative vision of an experience as a unique, unrelated and self-contained totality.

Metaphor serves a similar purpose. The conjunction of the incongruous wrenches the mind free from practical considerations. The purposes of life demand continual assimilation of the new to the old. Where the old has been absorbed in the life process, it often evokes the proper responses without the exercise of will or intellect. Habitual actions are often half-conscious. Impractical identifications destroy the possibility of fluent action and heighten the consciousness of the situation in which the organism finds itself. Metaphor by its impractical identifications suggests action and at the same time obstructs activity. The mind suspended on the

brink of action turns back upon the experience and contemplates it for itself. The unusual conjunction reminds us of the possibility of infinite combinations in the world which are neither required by nor conducive to the solution of practical problems. The infinite interrelatedness of elements within experience is suggested. We again see an experience as monadic—internally complex, externally free.

IV

The final mystery about a work of art is its beauty. What do we mean by calling a work of art beautiful? Beauty has been defined by Gaultier as aesthetic emotion made objective, while for Santayana it is objectified pleasure. Pleasure of bodily feeling is private and subjective. Pleasure of beauty is common and objective. Art is the realisation of this pleasure. For Croce, beauty is nothing but the expression of intuition, and intuition is the individualising activity which participates in the mobility of life. Expression and intuition cannot be separated, for the sign of intuition is expression.

All these theories agree in regarding beauty as a projection of the individual mind but they fail to tell us how the private feeling of the poet can assume a universal validity. To say that it is aesthetic emotion objectified is no answer. The problem precisely is to explain how the objectification takes place. The same criticism applies to Santayana's formulation, while Croce's attempt to explain the fact of

communication by referring back to the universal mind which is the only real and a unity is at best a desperate expedient. If the spiritual unity is to be taken literally, the problem of communication disappears. One communicates to oneself only by distinguishing between the communicator I and the communicated I. The denial of distinction *between* different selves must involve denial of distinction *within* the self.

Again, if expression and intuition are identical, must we say that our experience has no elements other than those of which we are explicitly aware? What about those nuances of feeling and perception which seem to elude consciousness however dim? We may even admit that the expression and the intuition are identical for the artist. Would it follow that they must be the same for his audience? How further to define the relation of the artist's expression and intuition to those of his public? If expression and intuition were really identical, each man would be condemned to live absolutely alone, "enisled in the sea of life". The intuition of the moment is coloured by all the past experience of the percipient. Since these experiences are and must be different with different individuals, their intuitions must also be tinged with different

emotional colours. How then can such intuitions be communicated?

Nor is it of any use to argue that beauty is objective, i.e., it is a quality characterising things in virtue of which, when we contemplate these objects, we enjoy what we regard as an aesthetic experience. In other words, according to such realistic theories, we have an aesthetic experience whenever we come into contact with objects of a special type, namely, those characterised by beauty. In his *Defence of Poetry*, Shelley seems to give support to such a theory. According to him, the poet "strips the veil of familiarity from the world and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms". The work of art is merely a faint copy of this unique and individual object of artistic awareness—a few rough, crude and imperfect marks to help the memory to retain and reconstruct the experience and recollect it when the lapse of time has blurred and effaced the impression. Poetry is witness, not so much to the poet's present inspiration as to the inspiration that once was his, the embodiment of a memory rather than of a vision. In Shelley's own language, "The mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence like

an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet."

The close analogy of this with the views of Wordsworth is evident. For the elder poet, poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity. It is true that the evaluation of recollection is different in the two poets. For Wordsworth, distance from the experience is a condition of emotional tranquillity, and hence of aesthetic judgment. Shelley admits by implication the need of such emotional distance but regrets that it should be so. Both, however, recognise a distinction between the experience and its expression. For Shelley, the experience is the essential thing, the expression at best a faint echo. For Croce, expression is the sign of the experience and unexpressed experience a contradiction in terms.

But the alternatives are both equally open to objection. If we believe with Shelley that art seeks to reproduce and retain the experience of a unique moment, we accept a distinction in principle between the experience and the expression which is far-reaching. There emerges a residue of significance or content apart from the expression of it, but the moment we admit this, art acquires a symbolical character that is incompatible with its concreteness. If there is an inner core of meaning and significance and the work of art is only a symbol of it, it is possible to have different works of art with exactly the same artistic content. If an analysis of Raphael's *Madonna* leads us to the conclusion that he had a vision of motherhood which he expressed through brush and canvas, we are led to the further conclusion that he or some other artist might have expressed the identical experience in stone and chisel or in words or music. In other words, we would have to admit the possibility of having a number of works of art which all expressed the same fact of experience. This would destroy the unique individuality which, we have already seen, is the essence of art. If we try to point out the quality in experience which leads to such aesthetic activity, we are faced with

a new difficulty. There does not seem to be any quality to which we can point as being specifically aesthetic. Whatever is an object of human experience can be an object of art. In the end we are therefore forced to admit that in calling anything beautiful, we do nothing more than indicate that the aesthetic experiences which we enjoy in connection with it arise, not from any quality that it possesses, but from our own aesthetic activity.

The position of Croce that expression and intuition are identical and cannot be distinguished is, as we have already seen, equally open to objection. To identify intuition and expression leads ultimately to the denial of art, for the essence of art is communication and the primary import of communication is communication to others. On the one hand, we do not seem to find in experience any element beyond what is intuited and expressed. On the other, identification of intuition and expression condemns the individual to eternal solitary confinement. In this predicament, we again turn to the concept of art as monadic. If the concept of art as monadic can overcome this paradox, the main obstacle to its acceptance is removed.

We have seen that the monadic character of

poetry is a function of its social origin, while society itself is a function of communication between its members. This explains why in art internal complication varies inversely to external reference. The more specific and particular an experience is in its inner character, the fewer are its external affiliations. The more general and vague its inner composition, the wider is its application to different fields of experience. An illustration from language may make this clearer. If the single word, *sea,* is uttered, the different possible reactions in the mind of the audience are almost infinite. One may think of a storm-tossed sea and another of a becalmed bay, a third may think of a moonlit sea and a fourth of the sea under sombre clouds. One may also think of a storm-tossed sea on a moonlit or on a dark clouded night. And so on *ad infinitum.* The moment we qualify the *sea* by an adjective, "storm-tossed", many of the possible reactions are eliminated. A becalmed bay on a moonlit night limits still further the range of our possible responses. The more complex become the images, the more specific become the responses of the audience. In the successful work of art, an infinite wealth of interrelated details leads to the realisation of a unique experience.

This may sound paradoxical but it is no more paradoxical than what is continually happening in the cognitive field. The identification of experience and expression seems at first sight even clearer in the field of knowledge. Cognitive experience is awareness and in awareness there seems hardly any room for suggestion and mystery. What we know, we know. All its characters and relations are equally the object of our awareness. And what we do not know, we do not know. Even the supposition of its existence is an illegitimate exercise of the intellect. There is therefore no point in saying that we do not know it. It is only about what we know that we can say that its nature is this or that. Outside this world of known reality, we have no right to suggest that something *is*. All reference to a transcendent reality is in the last analysis self-contradictory.

When therefore we say that we do not know, we do not really mean what we say. We *say* that we do not know, but what we *mean* is that we have partial knowledge. The possibility of the unknown is itself based on the known and explains how increase of knowledge is possible. If it were not so, what is unknown would remain for ever unknown. There is a second

problem closely connected with this first one: the distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge in what we know. Here also the problem is that of increase of knowledge, for knowledge can increase not only in extent but also in depth and detail. How is it possible to know more intimately what we have already vaguely known? The two problems—transition from ignorance to knowledge and that from implicit to explicit knowledge—are linked and can be answered together. The principle of the solution is that the distinction between the known and the unknown is not one of kind, but one of degree. When we say we know, we refer only to those aspects of the experience which are of immediate practical use to us. Other aspects which serve no pragmatic purposes are altogether ignored. Hence even when we know, there are aspects of the thing that remain unknown. It is impossible to exhaust the qualities and relations within even the simplest of experiences. In science, there is a generalisation of practical purposes. Objects are sought to be known, not from the point of view of a particular need of an individual but from that of the generalised needs of the community. This explains why from the point of view of the

individual, science is disinterested. From the point of view of the real, the generality of science is, however, an abstraction with an ultimate practical motive. Where practical motives are altogether discarded and we attempt to view things in their infinite interrelations, we arrive at the point of view of art. In art there is enjoyment of experience but no knowledge.

It is because there is no sharp difference between the known and the unknown that increase in extent and depth of knowledge is possible. We start with knowledge of some aspects and qualities of things but this does not mean that the other aspects and qualities are altogether unknown. Still less does it imply that they are unknowable. These other aspects are on the margin of consciousness. With variations in the degree of attention, they come within the field of explicit awareness. Similarly with regard to what is yet unknown. Because we must assume experience to be a systematic unity, the as-yet-unknown is constituted by elements which are on the margin of consciousness. Because it is a systematic unity, they can come in—given the appropriate conditions. The process of knowledge is a continual determination and definition

of the indeterminate and the indefinite. We, however, *know* only so far as the process has actually been completed.

In the case of poetry, we can attempt an answer on similar lines. The experience which poetry seeks to express is essentially communicable. This does not, however, mean that either expression or communication is, or ever can be, complete. In fact, the two are seen to be so closely related that the clearer the expression, the better the communication and *vice versa*. Indeed, one may go further and say that they are the two aspects of the same act of experience. Experience is known as an experience in proportion as it is expressed and communicated. Before expression and communication, the experience is itself inchoate and unformed. On the other hand, no experience is absolutely inchoate and unformed. An experience is never complete but is composed of wavering elements whose edges are undefined. Every experience is therefore capable of expression, but expression as well as communication must, for human beings, always remain a process. They can never become a completed product. There is nothing that cannot be the subject-matter of art. There is

nothing that art can express once and for all.

Experience, expression and communication are thus seen to be different facets of the same act. There is a bare margin of experience where expression is at a minimum and communication hardly takes place. The suffering of a passion and certain physiological sensations seem to offer examples of this. Even here the possibility of expression and communication cannot be altogether ruled out. A sufficiently great artist may yet make music out of them. By the unexpressed we can only mean that which is imperfectly expressed: that which is really unexpressed cannot be an object of experience at all. Between the expressed and the unexpressed, there is therefore no absolute cleavage. Expressiveness grows dim till at one stage it serves no useful purpose in life. From the point of view of commonsense and the practical needs of life, we call it the unexpressed.

Suggestion is therefore an element in all communication. In art, suggestion and communication are indistinguishable. This exquisite suggestiveness is the secret of what we call beauty in art. In cognitive experience, the suggestiveness is controlled for some definite end, immediate or ulterior. In art, because the experience is

detached from the necessities of practical life, the suggestiveness acquires an independent life of its own. The intensity of this life makes us attribute it to some undiscovered quality of the real. Its detachment from any specific purpose liberates art from the context of the life history of the poet. Its appeal is not merely personal but general. The impersonality and the independent life lead us to regard beauty as objective.

There is another factor which contributes to this hypostasis of beauty. Though art is disinterested and monadic, it seeks to penetrate behind the conventions and convictions of personal and social life and reach back to the undifferentiated and unchanging instincts of man. In our conscious activities, these instincts always appear clothed in the social habiliments which the process of history and evolution has imposed on them. In art we meet them shorn of all these familiar trappings. They strike us with a novelty and force that is great in proportion to the poet's success in reaching back to these primeval instincts. They seem strange and unfamiliar and yet move us beyond ourselves.

The incongruity between the work of art and the overwhelming response it evokes has often attracted notice. What wonder that we should

characterise the experience as irrational and refer it to some quality of the real which is generally not revealed to us? The moment we realise that the incongruity is apparent, the supposed irrationality of the experience also disappears. We do not regard it as mysterious or irrational that a mere child should start a mighty dynamo by turning on a switch. Here also the apparent incongruity is great. The turning on of the switch seems hardly commensurate with the tremendous consequences that follow. Nevertheless, there is no mystery, because the consequences are explained by the power that the dynamo holds in suspense. Exactly the same thing happens in a work of art. The overwhelming effects are due to the liberation of the energy of the instincts. Poetry succeeds where it can tap the secret sources of our instinctive energy. For this, the poet must go behind his personal convictions and social conventions and achieve the impersonality of racial instincts. The successful work of art seems charged with independent and objective life.

Here we find an explanation also of the fact that attempts to express personal feelings directly hardly ever succeed. The actor who gesticulates too much to express his sorrow often

succeeds only in provoking our laughter. The orator who betrays his feelings generally makes himself ludicrous. Exhibitionism brings out in us reactions that are unaesthetic. We may identify ourselves with the exhibitor and share in his sorrows and joys. We may, on the contrary, look at him externally as an object for contemplation. In either case, the personality of the artist intervenes between us and the work of art. We judge it by pragmatic standards and our response is practical, not aesthetic.

The poet succeeds only when he has found a symbol that can express the quality of his experience or feeling without the intervention of his personality. The reason for this is that in normal life, emotions adhere only to actual elements of reality. They generate the energy necessary for dealing with that element of reality in the proper way. In poetry, the necessity for this practical response is cut off. The entire energy of the emotion is directed towards the element of reality so presented. Expression of the personal feelings of the poet cannot achieve this. The moment the poet allows his personal feelings to enter into the poem, his own life history—with its concomitant practical urges—

destroys the detachment of the poem. Besides, the poet as an individual has an experience which nobody else shares or can share. As a poet, his disinterested attitude to an element or aspect of reality calls into being a complicated universe of feelings which it is possible for others to share. This is the meaning of Eliot's demand that the poet must continually surrender himself in order to succeed as an artist. "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."

The secret of poetic communication therefore lies in the use of the percept to evoke the universe of undying and undifferentiated instincts. The liberation of an experience from its function in the empirical life of the poet reveals in it relations and elements which make it unique, windowless and monadic. The complexity of the ingredients within this monadic universe expresses the permanence of the undying instincts and can therefore be recreated by each individual in the light of his own experience. The soul of poetry is therefore communication, but this communication demands a background of half-revealed mysteries. Beyond the lighted moment of experience lie vistas that stretch to the dim past—not only of the individual but

of the race. The emotional introversion of the rhythm and the suspended animation of the metaphor break up the surface of the familiar world and discover in it possibilities that the conscious mind cannot even contemplate. In achieving uniqueness, the poetic work simultaneously achieves universality. The monad of poetry mirrors not only the personal universe of the poet but also his social and racial universes. The successful work of art is inexhaustible in its appeal, for it is characterised by fullness of expression and the suggestion of infinite unrevealed mysteries.

APPENDIX
WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

William Butler Yeats

The fundamental fact about Yeats is that he was a lifelong solitary. He dwelt alone in the realms of his poetry and sought to build out of his dreams a sanctuary for his heart. The cruelty and evil in the matter-of-fact world did not therefore daunt him. He knew that beneath its veil of ugliness, there is a core of eternal truth and this is synonymous with beauty. It is only through faith that we can apprehend this innermost nature of truth, and poetic imagination is the basis of faith. Hence the only true seer is the poet. The only endeavour worth the effort is the achievement of true poetic vision. In his early youth, Yeats felt that isolation alone can lead to such vision and strove hard to preserve the unique quality of his imagination from being lost in the common generalities of every day experience. Such adventure of the

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imagination is rare at any time. It is astonishing at the end of the 19th century when triumphant science flaunted her power of explaining in terms of common knowledge the final mysteries of the universe. Yeats' poetry is a challenge to this victorious march of modern science. He proclaimed that life begins and ends in mystery and this ineluctable mystery is the very stuff of our imagination. Through hints and suggestions, it stirs the depths of our being and can never be caught in the definite and clear-cut formulas of science. To communicate the sense of this ineffable mystery is the poet's highest aim.

Yeats has smashed many idols in the course of his lonely quest. Perhaps, solitariness is the ultimate test of a man's calibre. Even the terror of death is the fear of loneliness in another form. The average man wants to live with his fellows, share common thoughts with them and follow common walks of life. It is only men of rare courage and energy that dare to leave the beaten track and strike out on their own. Yeats possessed that courage and energy in a generous measure and did not therefore hesitate to rebel against age-old custom and accepted belief. He has struck hard at false conventions of poetry and fought against the limitations which a narrow

conception of nationalism sought to impose on art. He has stood up against the tyranny of the majority and fearlessly opposed the stupidities of the mob mind. His constant aim has been to declare that the self-realisation of the individual in thought, word and action is at least of equal value. In his own life, the expression of an integrated personality has distinguished him from the commonalty of men and even in his distinction isolated him. The common man has therefore often admired him from afar but has never been able to accept him as a fellow.

The solitariness of an isolated life has not, however, destroyed Yeats' sense of reality. His phantasies are therefore not to be taken as the vague dreaminess of an idle mind. They express his conscious endeavour to interpret the mystery of the world. Like other great poets of the world, Yeats also was possessed of a practical and masculine intellect and considerable executive ability. Like them, he also applied his abilities, not to the achievement of power or wealth, but to the creation of beauty as a conscious objective. In intimate contact with reality, the poet ignores irrelevant details of the actual and seeks to penetrate to the centre of truth. Yeats' strong individuality found the

meaning of life in the solitariness of the spirit before the ultimate mystery. But his solitariness was not and could not be merely negative. Its essence lay, not in the denial, but in the acceptance and transcendence of all social values.

Yeats' success in integrating social relations and unique individuality is the basis of his great influence upon the contemporary mind. Such synthesis distinguished *ab initio* his work from that of his contemporaries and pointed the way towards the fulfilment of the Irish literary movement.

I

Irish literature was deeply influenced by the growing intensity of the nationalist struggle in the last decades of the 19th century. A literature which owes its origin to political upheaval and conflict cannot but be negative in its conscious attitude and temper. Poetic forms are not, however, born of a mood of mere denial. Hence, even the literature of revolt seeks to create new forms of beauty. In the process, it transcends the moulds of mere negative reaction. Irish literature of the latter 19th century may have originated as a symbol of deliberate revolt against the alien influence of England. The world, however, acclaimed it, not because it was a revolt against the English tradition, but because it expressed in forms of beauty the essential uniqueness of the Irish mind. Though not the pioneer, Yeats was perhaps the most important representative of this new Irish literary renaissance.

On the plane of politics, successful revolt against a foreign regime leads to the establishment of an autonomous order. The same

transformation takes place in the sphere of literature as well. A national liberator has a vision of future freedom even in spite of present bondage. The literary genius is able to create new and positive values out of the negative and reactionary atmosphere in which he is born. The close of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century mark some of the darkest hours in the long-drawn history of Irish suffering. Politically, Ireland was divided and shattered. The marks of English influence showed in every aspect of her social life. Even her awakening mind was held in thraldom by the English enchantment. In manner and custom, in poetry and art, even in thought and imagination, the Irish mind had lost its national flavour and become a pale shadow of the English mind. Nor was there any large scale revolt against this fatal imitativeness. The Ireland of the day forgot that the history of one country can never be repeated in another, and saw her own fulfilment in reflecting the processes of English history. It was the close of the Victorian era and England was intoxicated with her worldly success. The triumph of the machinery and a surfeit of wealth had coarsened the fibre of the English mind. It confused material prosperity with spiritual

excellence and was full of complacence for its own achievements. It was against this deadening influence of the English tradition that the youth of Ireland rebelled. They rejected its pretensions as false and sought to bring back the values of old Irish history. They realised that Irish freedom lay in rising above the success and vanity of English rule and reviving the old glory of Ireland. The restoration, by imaginative reconstruction, of her forgotten and neglected past was for them the secret of the refflorescence of the Irish spirit.

The Irish literary movement thus began as a revolt and adopted as its creed unadulterated romanticism. The conscious adoption of romanticism as its creed is evidence that the movement had its origin, not only in a spirit of rebellion, but also in one of escapism and self-deceit. That is why the early writers of the movement are engrossed with the legends and traditions, the aspirations and adventures of ancient Ireland. But concern with a remote past is always the symptom of an attempt to forget the disappointments and failures of recent history. The legends and traditions speak of a distant but glorious past and contain the promise of a still more glorious future. So it is in India to-day, so it

was in Ireland then. Immersed in these fond dreams, the young Irish mind attempted to forget the defeats and indignities of the present and the immediate past and wipe out all traces of its contact with the English conqueror. Romantic excesses inevitably accompany a revival of the nationalist spirit and Ireland was no exception. Irish literary renaissance began in a romantic revolt and its exponents tended to move away from the solid and sordid realities of the world as we know it in the experience of day to day. They sought to erect a shrine of the spirit where imagination reigns supreme. They have given us exquisite studies of the twilight land of myth and legend, often in verse which is beautiful like the myths themselves. But many of them never progressed beyond this stage of mere escapism and self-deceit.

Whether in art or in politics, genius can never find fulfilment in mere revolt. Even beauty, when it is born of reaction, is tinged with an element of unreality. Yeats realised this in his early youth. His literary endeavour was based on the recognition that creation is a higher activity than destruction, though at times destruction may be a necessary pre-condition of creativity. His impulse to

the creation of new literary forms was therefore based on a transcendence of mere romantic revolt. Though sharing in the Irish national movement, Yeats never accepted the restricted meaning given to nationalism in its political controversy. He insisted that a nation has never achieved greatness by drawing only upon its own past. True greatness has resulted from the assimilation of the cultural heritage of all races and all times. Even in the days of *Plays and Controversies,* he recognised that "a writer is not less national because he shows the influences of other countries and of the great writers of the world. No nation, since the beginning of history, has ever drawn all its life out of itself", and he went on to add that "the creative power of England was always at its greatest when her receptive power was the greatest". His work has therefore never been nationalist in the narrower sense of the term and yet it has always been permeated with the feeling of Irish life and history, an embodiment of the magic which gives its peculiar flavour to Irish legend and folk-lore. His romanticism has therefore meant more than a mere reaction against the immediate past.

The sense of unity of all experience pervades all expressions of Yeats' strong personality. It

is so acute that nothing is trivial or insignificant to him. He finds immense significance and universality in experiences which others reject as common-place and trivial, or casual and accidental—the aberrations of a momentary experience. The poet's earthly immortality is often regarded as a manifestation of his timelessness, but even great poets rarely pass this test in their own life time. With the exception of rare figures like Tagore or Yeats, even great poets must await for posterity to crown their efforts. In another sense, the timelessness of the poet is revealed in every act of poetic intuition. Our experience of time is based on the integration of its moments into a flow and perhaps no poet has immortalised the mood of the moment so poignantly as Yeats. A quick glance or a sudden whisper, the evanescent gleam of a falling wave or the echo of old forgotten songs are all experiences that disappear almost before they are felt. But Yeats has caught and crystallized in his magic verse the spirit of their sudden mystic life.

Without an acute sense of the wholeness of life and the unity of all experience, literature loses its contact with reality. The suggestion of incompleteness is therefore inherent even in

the exuberent beauty of romantic art. A literature which constantly seeks to transcend the limits of the known and familiar world must, in the very intensity of its efforts, become one-sided and partial. Romantic literature transcends the actual and the matter-of-fact and seeks perfection in the realms of imagination. But transcendence of the actual imperceptibly merges into a denial of the real. "Ripeness is all" in literature, and literature achieves this only by expressing the truth of life. The imaginative flights of romantic literature often degenerate into a distortion of life and become tinged with elements of unreality. Yeats in his best moments makes us forget that his world is a world of dreams and we lose ourselves in an imagination which seems to be the only reality of life. But even Yeats at times fails to overcome the separation of the real and the unreal. A faint feeling of futility reminds us that, beautiful as the imagination is, it is after all only imagination. Such mystic moods must from the very nature of the case be transient and ephemeral. They touch our lives at exceptional levels and that only at rare intervals. In spite of sensitiveness to beauty and emotional intensity, such poetry tends to become detached from life. We

may admire the poet's exquisite workmanship and surrender to the blinding flashes of his occasional insight, but he cannot give us the bread of life which is our sustenance from day to day. This explains why in spite of utter emotional abandon, the seeds of spiritual langour and decadence are inherent in the romantic literature of all ages and all countries.

Irish literature proves no exception to this general law. In the best work of Yeats, the narrowness born of such romantic creed has not interfered with the creation of beautiful forms. But in many of the other romantic writers of the Irish renaissance, this has led to an impression of one-sidedness that has prevented a wider acceptance of their work. At its worst, the romantic creed has become a habit rather than a faith. Such work at first startles us by its novelty but it cannot satisfy the craving for beauty in our hearts. Once the novelty has worn off, it is seen utterly naked and poor. Even where beauty has been achieved, it is so transitory that our craving remains unsatisfied and only tires us emotionally. George Russell is undoubtedly one of the biggest figures of the Irish literary movement, but even in *his* handling of myth and legend, the separation of the real

and the unreal is never completely overcome. It is only when A.E. sings of some sudden, mystic experience of the individual soul and the barriers of the self seem to fall away that we feel the beauty burn into our souls its final reality. A comparison of his work with that of Yeats reveals clearly the sources of the inherent weakness in romantic literature. Many of A.E.'s poems are instinct with the momentary glow that lights up the depths of the human heart from some transcendent source. The immortal moments live in such lyrics and overwhelm the consciousness with suggestions of the infinite. But even these poems are infected with the transience of the experience they seek to indicate. They are particular and therefore isolated. They shine like self-centred stars with pin-points of light but lack the large universality and extension of solar radiance.

Depth cannot always compensate for the lack of extensity in experience. Many of A.E.'s poems give an impression of monotony and slightness in spite of their inner variety. The many-sidedness of life demands expression in art and the attempt to exalt the momentary experience at the cost of life's vast expansion brings weariness to the spirit. The cruelty and

hardness of life, its inevitable and resistless flow take on a new appeal. The unworldly beauty of his poetry tired A.E. himself. In some of his later work, notably in the *House of Titans*, he tries to break through the magic circle and evoke a new sense of drama and character. The former suggestion of unreality in the beauty is transcended and we feel the pulsation of a firm and full-blooded humanity. The broader aspects and movements of life take the place of his former preoccupation with the immortal moments of experience. The history of the individual and the race is the story of defeat and its regrets, the gradual fading of the light of youth through the commonplace repetition of ordinary experiences and the slow ossification of flaming beliefs into a mass of habit and tradition. Even love is not all sweetness and joy. The slow decay of passion brings with it revolt and misery, the bitterness of doubt and jealousy and these are as real as the first fine raptures of its lyric growth. In his later days, A.E. therefore sought to bring his muse out of the palace of art into the world of common loves and hates, common hopes and fears and common human experiences of the ordinary work-a-day world.

No such transformation was needed in the

case of Yeats. This is the measure of his difference with A.E. Even the wildest imaginative flights of Yeats were instinct with a vigorous life, a life born out of his sense of the unity of such experiences with the drab life of every day. His poetry was therefore never frail. Even its most delicate moods are grounded in a robust masculinity of intellect. Romanticism was therefore for Yeats not an imaginative phantasy, but a conscious striving after a new way of life. From the very first, he sought beauty as a value irrespective of its racial, temporal or other antecedents. He did not allow personal aims or desires to interfere with the creation of his poetic world and looked upon himself as an element of the reality which he sought to reveal in forms of beauty. Individual purposes are irrelevant in such a quest. Even the insistent demands of a narrow nationalism could not divert him from his path. His knowledge and his intellect, his conscious experiences and his waking thoughts were all elements in the realisation of his poetic purpose.

II

The synthesis of emotion and intellect is the key-note of Yeats' poetry. This is precisely the reason why his work is marked by no sudden transformation. It has become a convention to say that his life was divided into compartments by the conflict between his imaginative life on the one hand and the science and industry and politics of the every-day world on the other. It is sometimes said that the former led to his enthusiasm for Ireland's legendary pre-history in his early life. His passion for beauty and terror, whether of the natural or the supernatural, is also sought to be explained by this imaginative delight in the shadows of the celtic twilight of Ireland. The trackless mires and bogs haunted him with their lure of danger and treachery. He lived in his self-centred world and found his fulfilment in singing its solitary joys and fears in immortal verse. But such critics forget that even in these days of imaginative aloofness, Yeats never denied the demands of the outside world. His constant endeavour even then was to transcend the merely individual

and express in his poems the sense of unity in the universe. Human relations are based on this transcendent life that informs every moment of our being. It is on account of this underlying unity that our tears and our laughter, our sorrows and our joys are fraught with infinite possibilities. Its very pervasiveness defies conceptual formulation, but sometimes we catch a glimpse of it in poetry. Through suggestion and imagery, poetry brings it into relation with the limited individual mind.

The French symbolists taught young Yeats that the concept by its very nature is definite and restricted in its appeal. Its nature is determinate and therefore it has only a limited power of suggestion. Besides, concepts as elements in judgment demand a definite attitude of belief. They must be accepted or else rejected. But if instead of concepts we make images the units of our poetry, the question of belief and disbelief cannot arise. Acceptance and rejection form the basis of philosophy, for the only concern of philosophy is with concepts. The image on which we base our poem depends, not on our philosophic attitude of acceptance or rejection, but on the vitality of our imagination and its emotional depth. Yeats sought for this vitality

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and depth in the collective memory of the racial unconscious. The transcendental ego which operates even in our limited individual selves has expressed itself in the traditions and songs, legends and folk-tales, fairy stories and myths of the nation and the race. Sometimes a song lingers in our memory long after the words have ceased. A line haunts us even when the poem has gone out of our mind. Such experiences can be explained only by the appeal of images that reach back to the racial unconscious. Whenever an image succeeds in stirring these depths, elaborate description becomes superfluous. The least hint evokes forms of imperishable beauty before the mind. Where the work of Yeats in his early period reaches this level, his emotions are communicated directly to our minds. The symbols become irrelevant. We interpret the imagery in the light of our own experiences. The private sensation of the individual becomes charged with the significance of universal humanity.

The sense of reality is clearly discernible in Yeats' apparent self-centredness. We have noticed the influence of Irish history on his poetic development and seen that his genius transformed the negation of revolt into a positive

achievement of beauty. This positive originality marks even the language of his verse and gives to it a quality that is peculiarly his own. Born of the fusion of his individual quality with racial genius, his poetic medium achieves a fluidity that is without parallel in English literature. Perhaps beside Swinburne, Yeats is the only poet who has been able to make hard English words sing. Shelley's verse is quick and alive and glimmers with the beauty and uncertainty of a flame. Yeats has brought a softness and flow even in the slower movement of his verse, an echo of the music of the cool movement of the flowing stream and of the slow fade-out of an Irish twilight.

Yeats the dreamer with no contact with the outside world is therefore only a figment of the commentator's imagination. He himself held that personality is the resultant of many influences and contacts. The larger the number of such forces and relations, the richer is the personality. Yeats in his own life proves the truth of his statement about the English mind in the Elizabethan age. Symbolism liberated him from the narrowness of an attitude of acceptance or rejection. The pre-Raphaelites like Morris and Rossetti taught him the value of multiform colour and

descriptive wealth. Irish legend and folk-lore contributed to the vitality of his imagination. The utter simplicity of Blake supplied his work with a model of depth and intensity. Are not traces of the influence of Synge seen in the greater emphasis upon the intellect in his later work? But the genius of Yeats transmuted all it touched. Hence, whatever the source of his elements, they are in his poetry the expression of his unique personality.

It is therefore a mistake to divide Yeats' life into two halves, and say that in his earlier days he was a romantic, but became a realist in later life. Most poets lose the capacity of a large or new utterance by the time they are fifty. In many cases, even the power to deck out the old in new garb is lost by them. But like Tagore, Yeats is an exception to this rule. We cannot, however, look on Yeats at fifty as a flaming revolutionary. We have seen that even in his early days, he sought universal significance in individual sensation. The change that overtakes his poetry in his later days can therefore be better regarded as a development than as a transformation. A new mental rigidity characterises this later work. The relation of imagination and reality also become more sharply

defined. The indefiniteness and magic of the celtic twilight disappear in the sharp clear light of a summer morning, but the landscape remains the same in spite of the profound changes in its temper and appeal. This is what happens to Yeats. But critics with insight could have foreseen these changes even in the promise of his early work. His new poetry gains in extent and depth, but it is a mistake to think that it shows any mysterious or inexplicable novelty.

It is as yet too early to say how far Synge is responsible for this new development of Yeats. The establishment of the Irish Theatre was itself a sobering influence, for it gave Yeats a hard schooling in the management of men and affairs. Another reason of the change must be sought in the political developments of the time. The second decade of the century saw the political revolt develop into a national struggle. The strongest obstacles to the realisation of national autonomy had been overcome and success seemed within grasp. Some even believed that the Anglo-Irish treaty meant the Irish autonomy for which so many patriots had bled. It was inevitable that in this changed political context, the mood of revolt and negation in Yeats should change. One can indulge in phantasies in the

days of irresponsible revolt, but autonomy demands that the dreams must be translated into facts. The private play of imagination must now yield to its social manifestations. Yeats in his fifties was a citizen of the new republic and was deeply conscious of the responsibilities of his new status. The urge to enter into the experience of every day became irresistible and a new note of concreteness and actuality crept into his verse. In drama and in poems, his one aim now becomes the expression of the common consciousness of man. His old skill and creative power is turned to a new use. Instead of experimenting with the symbol as a medium of art, he now attempts to express and communicate the infinite variety of human moods. The concept, which Yeats had earlier rejected as too definite and narrow, came into its own in this later poetry, and brought into it a new mental rigidity and force.

In some of his latest plays, the presence of a purpose is unmistakable but still they are not propaganda in any sense. A new feeling of futility seems to brood over them. The theme which recurs time after time is expressed in Yeats' query: "What if there is always something that lies outside knowledge, outside order? What if the irrational return? What if the

circle begin again?" In this question, Yeats feels his unity with the currents of European life, for the whole of European civilization today seems to brood upon the answer to this question.

It is not surprising that in this quickening of consciousness, the sense of tragedy should be deeper than the feeling of joy. Perhaps it is partly also the result of the course of Irish history. The Irish mind knew no hesitation or disunity in the days of its struggle and conflict. With the prospect of peace came internal dissensions, conflicts and distrust. Men had stood side by side when faced with death, but now in the days of peace, they looked at one another in suspicion and fear. Friend killed friend and brother fought against brother. Conflicting idealisms were crossed and re-crossed by temptation, deceit and avarice. Is it surprising that in these dark days of Ireland, Yeats with his poetic susceptibilities should be weighed down with gloom? Even in this gloom, he did not rebel nor lose himself in the slough of pessimist denial. Can there be any greater proof of the vitality of his imagination than this? His later work is therefore instinct with the feeling for the vastness of life and the inevitability of the march of fate. But the sense of tragedy has only added depth to his

poetry. It has not brought any note of cynicism or frustration. In spite of all its beauty, the butterfly caught in the wheel must die. Slow decay awaits the beauty, genius and nobility of man in the inexorable march of time. The essence of tragedy is not suffering. Life's tragedy lies in the inevitable cessation of all endeavour. Life begins with the promise of eternal and undying faith, but in the end the soul finds solace in abandoning the hope of even physical survival.

Over Yeats' later work, there broods the presence of the vast and shapeless powers that surround and circumscribe the limited efforts of man. The aim he sets himself is the embodiment of the clash of fate. In such a context, the characters of his plays are hardly human beings. He does not therefore aim at the creation of character. The dramatic persons are merely symbols of the unseen forces which shape the destiny of the world. They are not symbolic plays in the narrow sense of the term, but then one might add that true art is never symbolical. The distinction of symbol and symbolised would disturb the unity which is the centre of the drama. In these plays, one cannot therefore point to anything and say that *this* is the symbol and

that is its meaning. Yet on the other hand, the drama in the plays is not human. Even where there seem to be individual men, they are in fact only types. There is no action issuing out of character and yet one can hardly regard this as a defect when the plays do not even claim to be dramas of human action. The result is that there is a sense of purpose ever present in the plays. And yet the purpose cannot be described in any way other than through its representation in the play. If there are any meanings, they have been fused with the symbols so as to produce the illusion of significant life. Here perhaps we find a survival from the days when Yeats experimented with symbolism in his poetry.

Thus the unity of Yeats' poetic life is never disturbed, though it continually grows in depth and extent. The synthesis of imaginative content with conceptual thought worked to make his poetry vital and concrete. It earned for Yeats the status of a timeless seer.

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H. H. PRICE, M.A., B.SC.,
Wykeham Professor of Logic, Oxford.

. . . I find the translation of my edition of Kant's First Introduction in this book very good. . . .

PROF. DR. GERHARD LEHMANN, Berlin.

. . . In addition to the translation, Mr. Kabir has provided us with a set of introductory essays. They seem to me to show great ability and I hope sincerely that they may be the prelude to a larger work on Kant some time in the future. . . . he is distinctly original also in thought and statement and throws new light on several points in Kant.

A. C. EWING, M.A., D.PHIL., in *Mind.*

. . . I have perused the introductory essays and have compared the translation with the original. I think that the essays are very well written and full of useful and important information. I find the translation, as far as I can judge, very good, correct and readable.

PROF. DR. RUDOLF METZ, Heidelberg.

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. . . his is a very beautiful land. and it is eloquent of Mr. Kabir's real gift that he can make it so vivid in an alien medium . . . poetic imagination lights up the details of his detailed description as a lightning flash lights up the rain masses at night. . .

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